

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA



## THESIS



### BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN THE BOSNIAN WAR: STRATEGIC CULTURE AND NATIONAL INTERESTS

by

August Howard Hein

December, 1994

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**BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN THE BOSNIAN WAR:  
STRATEGIC CULTURE AND NATIONAL INTERESTS**

by

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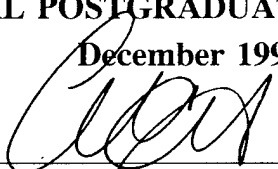
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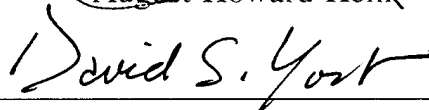
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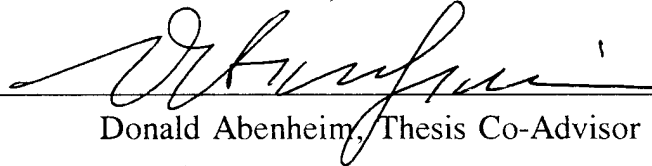


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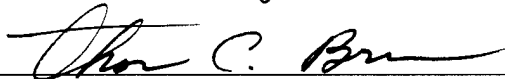
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the British involvement in the current Bosnian War by focusing on two specific policy determinants, strategic culture and national interests. The thesis assigns working definitions to these two concepts and then applies them to the Balkan conflict to determine how each has motivated the British decision to intervene in the current crisis. The thesis also provides a concise survey of the historical British interests in the Balkans, in support of this study. The thesis concludes that each concept has exerted some influence on British decision-making with respect to the Balkans. Indeed, strategic culture can wield considerable impact in the formation of British foreign policy. The narrowly defined concept of national interest that is employed in this work has also been a factor in British efforts in the current Balkan struggle, only to a lesser degree.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Great Britain has been one of the main contributors to the peacekeeping contingent in Bosnia, with some 3700 British troops on the ground in the war-torn state. The United States has thus far refrained from this level of commitment to the conflict, limiting its contributions to mainly humanitarian airdrops and maritime support missions. Great Britain has repeatedly sought increased U.S. participation in Bosnia in the form of ground forces but this has not materialized to date.

This fact raises interesting questions about the security concerns of these two NATO allies in the post-Cold War world, where the absence of a common threat and purpose has removed many of the foreign policy restrictions of old. In the future, the United States may have to entertain the question of providing support to these allies during the course of individual operations which are not necessarily in keeping with the previous collective interests of the alliance.

This thesis examines the British involvement in the current Bosnian War by focusing on two specific policy determinants, strategic culture and national interests. The thesis assigns working definitions to these two concepts and then applies them to the Balkan conflict to determine how each has motivated the British decision to participate in the current crisis. The thesis also provides a concise survey of the historical British interests in the Balkans, in support of this study. The hypothesis of the

thesis is that each concept has exerted some influence on British decision-making with respect to the Balkans.

The thesis concludes that strategic culture can wield considerable impact in the formation of British foreign policy. The narrowly defined concept of national interest that is employed in this work also contributes to British efforts in the current Balkan struggle, only to a lesser degree.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. THE CURRENT CRISIS

The current Balkan War represents the largest military conflict in Europe since World War Two. Since the outbreak of hostilities in Slovenia in June of 1991, the fighting has spread to other regions of the former Yugoslavia with the state of Bosnia-Hercegovina becoming the main battleground. The relatively minor skirmishes that marked the onset of the affair have been wholly replaced during the course of the last three years by major clashes between Croats, Muslims and Serbs. Now, as the war continues unabated, save for the periodic token ceasefires, the world watches in dismay as the death toll mounts and one historic site after another is leveled.

The United Nations has been making an effort to bring the war to an end through a massive peacekeeping mission, but it appears that peace is still a long way off. Furthermore, with U.N. forces having come under attack this past year, and with the recent indications that a majority of nations are in favor of lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia-Hercegovina, the stage may set for the removal of all U.N. peacekeepers, leaving the actors in the Balkans to their destinies.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Barbara Crossette, "U.N. Assembly Approve Call for End to Bosnian Arms Embargo", *New York Times*, November 4, 1994, p.A4. See also, Roger Cohen, "Maps, Guns and Bosnia", *New York Times*, December 6, 1994, pp. A1, A3.

Several nations, however, have devoted much in the way of resources and personnel to the peacekeeping effort in the former Yugoslavia, and remain committed to it. In April 1994, some thirty-five countries maintained nearly 36,000 troops in the Balkans to assist the U.N. in enforcing its peacekeeping operations. The war-torn state of Bosnia has received the greatest concentration of troops to date, some 17,000 strong. Two nations in particular--France and the United Kingdom--have contributed the most to this Bosnian contingent, accounting for roughly 45% of the total U.N. force.<sup>2</sup>

The United States has only token force levels in the theater in general and literally a handful in Bosnia. This lack of intervention in the form of ground forces by the U.S. has indicated the degree to which the United States has thus far been willing to get involved in the conflict. And despite repeated calls from the United Kingdom, and others, for the deployment of additional American forces to the beleaguered area, the Clinton administration has maintained that American "peacekeepers" will not step on Balkan soil en

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<sup>2</sup>Steven R. Bowman, "Bosnia and Macedonia: U.S. Military Operations", *Congressional Research Service Issue Brief*, August 24, 1994, pp. 11-12.

masse until there is a genuine peace to be kept in the region.<sup>3</sup>

Such a peace as the one the United States has been holding out for may still indeed be a long way off. The Croats and Muslims who had suffered heavy losses for most of the first three years of battle, and had agreed in principle during peace negotiations to a partitioning of Bosnia, now appear to be militarily rejuvenated. They may therefore prove less likely to opt for a settlement, especially if they feel that they now possess the capability to achieve more frequent victories in battle and regain territory lost in earlier defeats. In the meantime, France and the U.K. will continue to shoulder the burden in a Bosnia where tensions have not eased and peacekeepers are under an almost constant threat of harm from any and all of the participating belligerents. To date, the United Kingdom has suffered twelve fatalities among its troops in the former Yugoslavia, yet has not let the specter of body bags deter it from its mission; Lord David Owen has accused the United States of being intimidated by this specter, in view of the U.S. level of involvement in the Balkans.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>John Lancaster, "NATO's 'Neutrality' May Be Early Casualty", *Washington Post*, April 11, 1994, pp. A1, A12.

<sup>4</sup>Eugene Robinson, "EC Mediator Says U.S. 'Killed' Plan for Bosnia", *Washington Post*, November 27, 1993, p. A22.

That the United States has chosen to distance itself from this European crisis, despite continued pleas for assistance from its close ally, Great Britain, has raised important questions with regard to the post-Cold War national interests of both nations. Clearly, the United Kingdom has deemed the Balkan unrest important enough to commit thousands of ground troops to the region. And the British have done this knowing full well that this could lead to an increased military commitment there.

This potential quagmire-in-the-making argument (coupled with the 1992-1994 debacle in Somalia) in part explains why the Clinton administration has refrained from intensifying the U.S. commitment to the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) assets in theater. Predictably, American allies in Europe can find little comfort in such an explanation, especially when the prospects for a lasting peace in the region appear so dim.

How then can one explain the current makeup of peacekeeping forces in the Balkans, and more specifically in devastated Bosnia? Are the national interests of Cold War allies such as the U.S. and the U.K. suddenly so drastically different as to warrant distinctly separate policies in the region?

Several high-level U.S. officials including Senator Sam Nunn, the Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman, and

William Perry, the Secretary of Defense, have stated that U.S. interests mainly lie in preventing the present conflict from spreading to neighboring areas. It is feared that such a turn of events could lead to a much larger Balkan War, possibly even pitting perennial NATO rivals Greece and Turkey against one another once more.<sup>5</sup> This potential disruption to NATO cohesion helps to explain the deployment of approximately 400 U.S. troops bordering the conflict in the country known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

But what of the interests of the United Kingdom in the Balkans? Does it suffice to say that containment of the battle to the areas already afflicted is the British goal as well, or are there other considerations at work that do not coincide with U.S. objectives? Is it possible that the U.K. feels more responsible for resolving the conflict merely because of its closer proximity to the Balkans? Have the British perhaps used their early commitment to the affair to demonstrate a decreased reliance on the United States in the post-Cold War European order?

This thesis examines Britain's involvement in the current struggle in an attempt to determine what factors have motivated it to commit thousands of ground troops to

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<sup>5</sup>John F. Harris, "Perry Sees Wider Role in Bosnia", *Washington Post*, July 18, 1994, pp. A1, A20.



the peacekeeping cause in the Balkans. The work focuses on strategic culture as a determinant, among others, of British policy-making. The study includes a historical review of British interests in the Balkans as well as an examination of the current justifications for British involvement there. The work analyzes the origins and continuing dynamics of British operations in Bosnia, with a view to determining the extent to which British involvement reflects calculations of national interest as well as the influence of British strategic culture. The hypothesis is that neither explanation is satisfactory, if considered in isolation, and that the combination of the two analytical frameworks may advance understanding of British motives.

The thesis is based on a qualitative analysis of current and historical sources on British policy in order to explain current decision-making regarding Bosnia. The elusive and demanding concept of strategic culture will be employed in as rigorous a fashion as possible to identify the principal features of British strategic culture that are pertinent in today's conflict.

This is an important topic with respect to the future of U.S. national security policy for three main reasons. First, it may help to explain why the United Kingdom, in some ways the most reliable twentieth-century American ally, is militarily immersed in the Bosnian conflict, albeit in a

peacekeeping function. To date the United States has limited its roles in the fighting in the former Yugoslavia mainly to air and maritime functions and has avoided committing large numbers of ground forces. Second, a deeper understanding of British involvement in this conflict may shed light on how British strategic culture and decision-making may define present and future British national interests. And third, because of the contrasting interests of the nations that border the former Yugoslavia, the Bosnian conflict has immediate and potential long-term importance for the future of Western security as a whole.

#### **B. STRATEGIC CULTURE**

Prior to embarking on an examination of the aspects of British strategic culture that may be affecting British policy today, it is necessary to provide an introduction to the concept of strategic culture in general.

Strategic culture is a relatively new term in the field of international relations, having appeared on the scene in 1977. Yet its use has already evolved to encompass much more than was intended when it was originally introduced. Jack Snyder first coined the phrase in a 1977 Rand paper in which he sought to explain the process by which future generations of Soviet officers would be indoctrinated

regarding the employment of nuclear weapons. The defining paragraph follows:

It is useful to look at the Soviet approach to strategic thinking as a unique 'strategic culture'. Individuals are socialized into a distinctively Soviet mode of strategic thinking. As a result of this socialization process, a set of general beliefs, attitudes and behavioral patterns with regard to nuclear strategy has achieved a state of semipermanence that places them on the level of 'culture' rather than mere policy. Of course, attitudes may change as a result of changes in technology and the international environment. However, new problems are not assessed objectively. Rather, they are seen through the perceptual lens provided by the strategic culture.<sup>7</sup>

Snyder's original terminology, with its relatively precise meaning, has since been recast by international relations scholars. "Strategic culture" has thus become an analytical concept that differs from the prototype in two very distinct ways. First, it is generally accepted that strategic culture is a neutral concept, applicable to all nations to different degrees. The obvious second difference is that the phrase is not limited to the field of nuclear weapons study. It is useful then to examine how some of the many torchbearers of strategic culture have re-defined this

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<sup>7</sup>Jack Snyder as quoted by Ken Booth in Strategic Power: USA/USSR Carl G. Jacobsen, editor (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 122.

concept in an attempt to shed light on what comprises it and how it can affect decision-making within a state.

Professor Alastair I. Johnston of Harvard University offered this definition of the concept in a recent work:

Most of those who use 'strategic culture' explicitly or implicitly tend to argue that there are consistent and persistent historical patterns in the way particular states (or state elites) think about the use of force for political ends. That is, different states have different predominant strategic preferences that are rooted in the 'early' or 'formative' military experiences of the state, and are influenced to some degree by the philosophical, political, cultural and cognitive characteristics of the state and state elites as these develop through time.<sup>8</sup>

Time is an important factor in the composition of strategic culture for two main reasons. First, strategic culture may encompass the historical experiences of "nations", in the cultural sense, long before they became nation-states in the modern connotation. For example, a study of the strategic culture of modern China would no doubt reveal the influence of Confucian thought on the society. Likewise, an analysis of present day Hungary would be incomplete without considering the impact of the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires. Where to begin when undertaking the

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<sup>8</sup>Alastair I. Johnston, *Thinking About Strategic Culture*, Harvard University Working Paper, December 1993, p. 1.

study of a nation's strategic culture involves a degree of subjective judgement.

Second, strategic culture is an evolving concept that can reflect changes in both the domestic and international environments. This process may happen slowly or relatively abruptly. Moreover, like culture in general, strategic culture can never rest on past laurels and must adapt to particular changing conditions or risk assuming a certain degree of "strategic backwardness."

Samuel H. Barnes brings out this point about culture in his 1988 study. "Strategic culture" can be effectively substituted for "culture" in the following excerpt:

...it (culture) is continually being modified, often in profound ways, by a variety of influences. Culture is an historical phenomenon, existing in space and time. It meets human needs, and in the long run a culture withers and dies if it does not do this with some level of effectiveness. Culture exists not only within a human environment but also within physical and international environments; it reacts to changes in all these spheres. How much a culture adjusts is in part a function of its strength and its ability to repel demands from these various environments.<sup>9</sup>

Just as Barnes describes the demise of a culture that fails to meet human needs, so too can a specific strategic

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<sup>9</sup>Samuel H. Barnes, "Politics and Culture" Working Paper, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), p.12.

culture fail to meet the security needs of the nation-state, with ensuing adverse consequences.

Ken Booth offers another definition of the elements of strategic culture and how they interact to influence a nation's foreign policy:

The concept of strategic culture refers to a nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behavior, habits, symbols, achievements and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat or use of force....The strategic culture of a nation derives from its history, geography and political culture, and it represents the aggregation of the attitudes and patterns of behavior of the most influential voices; these may be, depending upon the nation, the political elite, the military establishment and/or public opinion.<sup>10</sup>

Booth goes on to submit that strategic culture can be a predictive tool of sorts because it defines a set of patterns for a nation's behavior on war and peace issues. He further suggests that because of the continuities in state practices that arise in part due to the impact of strategic culture, it is legitimate to talk about a particular national "style" in the theory and practice of strategy.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ken Booth, *The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed, Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, Carl G. Jacobsen, editor (London: MacMillan, 1990), p. 121.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p.121.

Not surprisingly, culture in general, let alone strategic culture, does not command much respect among political scientists with regard to its effects on decision-making because of the inherent difficulty (perhaps impossibility) of quantifying the concept in precise empirical terms or through the use of a universal model. It is an admittedly difficult undertaking to identify the essential elements that comprise a "national style." Yet as Booth warns, the difficulty of defining strategic culture does not justify ignoring it as a force in international affairs:

The examination and validation of the concept of strategic culture will always be an intellectually demanding task. It will also remain an art rather than a science; like most important dimensions of international politics, its explication will never be amenable to quantification. But it is a key concept and can only be ignored at someone's peril, be it to an academic reputation or a nation's security.<sup>12</sup>

This is not to suggest that strategic culture is without support in the academic arena. On the contrary, both Ken Booth and Alastair Johnston submit that a growing number of scholars in the international relations field have in recent years expressed interest in the pursuit of strategic culture-related concepts after having become

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 125.

discontented with theories governed by rigid assumptions and ahistorical models.<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, Johnston emphasizes that the realist and neo-realist paradigms that have dominated much of the international security studies field do not have a monopoly on the concept of rationality. Strategic culture-influenced decisions can contain elements of rational thinking but not to the extent postulated in game rationality or classical rational-choice expected-utility models. Instead, within strategic culture, rationality is accompanied by a historically imposed inertia on choice which makes strategic decision-making less responsive to the parameters of specific contingencies.<sup>14</sup>

No single theory regarding the use of force by nation-states is predominant, and it is certainly not the intention here to field such a claim on behalf of strategic culture. Too often, however, political scientists, without violating that premise, have nonetheless discounted the importance of strategic culture altogether as a contributory variable in

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<sup>13</sup> See Booth, pp. 122-123; and Johnston, p. 4., including footnote 6. Booth suggests that the growth of interest in the cultural dimensions of the theory and practice of strategy was a reaction against such ahistorical approaches as game theory. In footnote 6, Johnston cites the 1988 work of Joseph Nye and Sean Lynn-Jones, who concluded that strategic studies has been characterized for too long by American ethnocentrism and a concomitant neglect of "national styles of strategy."

<sup>14</sup> Johnston, p. 2.



their theories and models. Some question whether it even exists. And with the difficulty in quantifying the concept, it has become in many instances easy to disregard it completely.<sup>15</sup>

In stark contrast, strategic culture, by its nature, is a "complexity-friendly" concept--one that welcomes the existence of additional influential variables as a natural occurrence. It does not claim the right to be the preeminent policy determinant in all cases. It merely seeks its just due as an influential factor in the decision-making process. Booth adeptly summarizes this point by asserting that what happens within the decision-making machinery of a nation "is not some game of politics divorced from the history, geography and political culture of that particular state; politics, plain or otherwise, take place in a distinctive socio-psychological area of the multicultural map of the world."<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, it is crucial to remember two points when assessing strategic culture. The first is that it is not a panacea with regard to explaining world events. Its study merely provides an additional useful perspective, when attempting to explain the actions of states and state

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<sup>15</sup>Booth, p. 124.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, p. 124.

elites. Second, the application of strategic culture to an issue does not void all other methods of analysis. Nothing precludes analysts from arriving at comparable conclusions through other conceptual frameworks. As was stated earlier, strategic culture does not reject rationality; it is entirely possible that a traditional "realist" approach to an issue could lead to the same course of action as that recommended by adherence to the tenets of one's strategic culture.

When Ken Booth refers to patterns of behavior he is speaking of decisions, often times similar in nature, that have been made in the past. At the time each decision was made it presumably involved a calculation based somewhat upon the national interests of that nation as seen by those in power. That these decisions have been repeated, verified and continually applauded over the years, through changing circumstances, is the process by which they can become integral parts of a nation's national character or strategic culture.

#### **C. THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST**

A nation can choose to embark on a particular policy with regard to foreign affairs for any number of reasons. It has already been suggested here that strategic culture may play a role in this decision-making process. For

example, the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of the various personalities in positions of leadership and influence within countries constitute an important policy determinant in the eyes of historians.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, international relations theorists have for years offered hypotheses about states' behavior. And while these scholars do not totally discount the contributions made by great men in history, they have developed concepts that supposedly supersede much of the decision-making at the individual level. These foreign policy-making propositions have encompassed many theories and paradigms. Resultant terms such as neorealism, structural realism, systemic theory, reductionist theory, etc., all have been used in one form or another to try to explain the actions of nation-states. Like most other countries, Britain's endeavors in world affairs over the years have been thoroughly scrutinized by the proponents of these theories, with varying degrees of success.

It is not the intention here to try to decide which of these ideas best fits British foreign policy history. In fact, for the purposes of this thesis, it appears appropriate to consider one approach as a possible contrast with strategic culture as a policy determinant--the theory that states act in their "national interest."

Unfortunately, within international relations scholarship, the concept of "national interest" seems to be almost as difficult to pin down as strategic culture. According to Joseph Frankel,

'National interest' is a singularly vague concept. It assumes a variety of meanings in the various contexts in which it is used and, despite its fundamental importance, these meanings often cannot be reconciled; hence no agreement can be reached about its ultimate meaning.<sup>17</sup>

The above reflection is indeed a rather unsettling beginning to a book devoted to quantifying the concept of "national interest." Nonetheless, that is exactly what Professor Frankel of the University of Southampton attempted to do in the remainder of that particular work. His extensive efforts are beyond the scope of this study; yet, for our purposes, the most important item to take away from his volume on national interest is this very disclaimer at the start of the book.

Yet national interest is a concept undoubtedly more familiar to the attentive public than strategic culture. This is a result of the overuse, perhaps to the point of abuse, of the phrase national interest in the media. Newspapers often use the term loosely in articles discussing

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<sup>17</sup>Joseph Frankel, National Interest, (London: Pall Mall Press, Ltd., 1970), p. 15.

foreign policy as though their editors were privy to the contents of the national interest. Politicians too are quick to employ the term when articulating their views on the appropriate courses of foreign policy. Yet, this familiarity with the phrase does little to help clarify its meaning.

It is almost as though it is assumed that the inhabitants of a given nation have reached a subconscious consensus with regard to its content and presumably rely upon their leadership to act accordingly in the international arena. James Rosenau suggested that the phrase contains one central precept, but actually has two separate applications:

As an analytical tool, it is employed to describe, explain, or evaluate the sources or the adequacy of a nation's foreign policy. As an instrument of political action, it serves as a means of justifying, denouncing or proposing policies. Both usages, in other words, refer to what is best for a national society.<sup>18</sup>

This statement, despite assigning a degree of accountability to the idea of national interest, still does not offer up a clear definition of the same. Moreover, as is the case with strategic culture, some political scientists find the employment of the concept so confusing

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<sup>18</sup>James N. Rosenau, "National Interest", *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, 1968, p. 34.

as to warrant dismissal of it altogether. Raymond Aron, for instance, gives up the attempt at its rational definition, regarding it as either a formula vague to the point of being meaningless, or a pseudothory.<sup>19</sup>

Yet Frankel points out in his book that, despite its elusiveness, a majority of political scientists do attach significance to the concept, to include such notable theorists as Has Morgenthau and Arnold Wolfers. And once again, as is the case with strategic culture, national interest need not always be the prime decision-making element; but its existence necessitates that it is in fact one such element:

Whether considered an independent, a mediating or a dependent variable, or just a rationalization, 'national interest' constitutes an element in the making of foreign policy to which, however it may be defined, statesmen profess to attach great importance.<sup>20</sup>

A brief look at the way in which prominent British statesmen have attempted to define national interest is no more fruitful in yielding a working definition. In confronting the issue of British national interest in a letter to then Foreign Secretary Clarendon in 1856, past and future Prime Minister Viscount Palmerston had this to say:

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<sup>19</sup>Raymond Aron, Peace and War, 1966, p. 89., as quoted in Frankel pp. 17-8.

<sup>20</sup>Frankel, p. 18.

"When people ask me... for what is called a policy, the only answer is that we mean to do what may seem to be best, upon each occasion as it arises, making the Interests of Our Country one's guiding principle."<sup>21</sup> Additionally, at the turn of the century, Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey commented in his memoirs that: "British Foreign Ministers have been guided by what seemed to them to be the immediate interest of this country, without making elaborate calculations for the future."<sup>22</sup>

Such seemingly ambiguous statements were common from British statesmen because, as Henry Kissinger suggests, Britain's geo-strategic position defined its ultimate security needs, and enabled its leaders to take an ad hoc approach to solving foreign policy questions:

Great Britain required no formal strategy because its leaders understood the British interest so well and so viscerally that they could act spontaneously on each situation as it arose, confident that their public would follow....Convinced that they would recognize the British national interest when they saw it, British leaders felt no need to elaborate it in advance.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Harold Temperley and Lillian Penson, Foundations of British Foreign Policy 1792-1902, (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1938) p. 88.

<sup>22</sup>R.W. Seton-Watson, Britain in Europe 1789-1914, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>Kissinger, p. 96.

This observation is equally frustrating in its absolute vagueness about what constitutes the national interest. Yet when combined with the earlier remarks by Palmerston and Grey it suggests that some calculation, however unscientific, of the "national interest" has always played a role in British foreign policy decisions.

With all options exhausted, there is little choice left but to propose a working definition of national interest that reflects the vagueness of the earlier formulations while still allowing for a comparison with the other operative policy determinant in this study, strategic culture.

In doing so it is important to distinguish between two generally accepted interpretations of "national interest." The first is a broadly conceived definition that, by its nature, can overlap in purpose and meaning with the concept of strategic culture. This liberal connotation of the national interest can include such sweeping goals as the preservation of national cohesion, the promotion of a certain international order, or the upholding of a state's social and constitutional structure.

The other interpretation of national interest, and the one used in this thesis for analytical purposes, is more narrowly defined and centered more along the lines of realist theory, sometimes known as "power politics," or



Realpolitik. This definition of national interest concerns the pursuit of material interests such as power,<sup>24</sup> territory, and economic gains as the ends in foreign policy. It is a concept that focuses on near-term tangible acquisitions as opposed to far-reaching political ideals and social values.

It is not so far-fetched then to consider a usable definition of national interest that is almost an antithesis of strategic culture. Strategic culture-based decisions take into account factors such as values, morals and, historical and emotional concerns. In this light, strategic culture can be interpreted as a people's self-definition; it is a policy determinant that can involve purposes and priorities other than the pursuit of power and material gains. Peregrine Worsthorne, the editor of the London *Sunday Telegraph*, captures the essence of this point in assessing how British leaders of the nineteenth century decided to employ the Royal Navy to suppress the morally

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<sup>24</sup>See Martin Wight, Power Politics, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1978) and Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Fifth Edition, 1973) for discussion on the definitions and uses of power in foreign affairs. Morgenthau characterized relations between states as a struggle for the maximization of power. In this regard power was the national interest. The usage of power here is closer to that of Wight, who postulated that power could encompass concepts such as prestige and honor as well.

reprehensible slave trade despite its profitability to England in the commercial sense:

...a rational consideration of the national interest is not enough to determine such matters. National character comes into it as well....the British decided to do it for no better reason than that such action defined the kind of power Britain wanted to be. It was a matter of national identity, not of foreign policy in any strict sense of the term.<sup>25</sup>

The national interest can thus be seen as a factor that influences foreign policy without regard to these issues, and rather is only concerned with the immediate tangible results of a decision, considered in terms of power and material interests. In this regard, for the purposes of a distinct comparison, it can be stated that if foreign policy actions are not attributable to strategic cultural concerns, then they must be due to a "dispassionate assessment of the national interest,"<sup>26</sup> or to some combination of the two.

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<sup>25</sup>Peregrine Worsthorne, "What Kind of People?", *The National Interest*, Winter 1990/91, p. 98.

<sup>26</sup>Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p. 26.



## II. BRITISH STRATEGIC CULTURE

The concept of strategic culture encourages a recognition of how difficult it is to apply it to the study of any particular nation. A given state's strategic culture can be colored by many variables. No "cookbook" list of principles exists--that is, points to consider that consistently yield insight about a nation's true character. Countries are like snowflakes in that each has been shaped by its own historical experiences; and each has emerged with a unique strategic culture.

Moreover, any scholarly assessment of a national strategic culture is by definition a subjective exercise, and destined to come under scrutiny. Nonetheless, it is important to identify certain aspects of the strategic culture of the United Kingdom in order to relate them to the current crisis. Analyzing British strategic culture in its entirety would truly be a hefty task. The subject could doubtless fill several volumes. Such an effort is not undertaken here, yet it is critical to try to identify the elements of British strategic culture that might be relevant to today's Balkan conflict.

This discussion of pertinent characteristics of British strategic culture does not, it should be noted, prioritize them in any specific order of importance. After all,

strategic culture, being a composite of factors, does not lend itself well to such an orderly breakdown, or ranking.

There is no better way to initiate an examination of British strategic culture than by looking to one of the elements that Booth considers to be of critical importance--geography. In the case of Britain, its most obvious geographical trait--that it is an island nation--has been a blessing over the years in that it has quite literally helped it to survive. The English Channel is a rather narrow passage, but when viewed as a defensive moat, it takes on size; and it has loomed very large throughout British history. Its significance as an overwhelming obstacle to potential conquerors helps to account for the fact that Britain has not been successfully invaded since the battle of Hastings in 1066.<sup>27</sup>

This immunity from foreign invasion was not due to a scarcity of sizable wars on the part of the British. Since 1689, England has been involved in some twelve major wars in which it was pitted, alone or in an alliance, against one or more of the other major European powers of the day.<sup>28</sup> That

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<sup>27</sup>There is some scholarly disagreement on this point. David French represents the minority opinion when he suggests that 1688 constituted a successful invasion, even though William of Orange was invited to accede to the throne by an influential group representing the protestant nobility.

<sup>28</sup>David French, The British Way in Warfare, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990) p.xii.

Britain emerged victorious from nearly all of these conflicts testifies to both the diplomatic skills of her statesmen in the area of alliance-building, and the proficiency of her armed forces. Nonetheless, it is the impressive battle record, "running like a bright thread through English history,"<sup>29</sup> has left its indelible mark on the psyche of a nation:

This freedom from foreign conquest since the Norman age has given to English history a quality not shared by the history of any other European people. At some time or other in the last 500 years every great capital city in the western world except London has been occupied by an enemy...<sup>30</sup>

The net result of this positive British military heritage has been a sustained "astonishing confidence in victory" on the part of the British people at large.<sup>31</sup>

This is an even more remarkable character trait of the British when one considers the general disdain the public displayed toward the military until the nineteenth

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<sup>29</sup>Sherard Cowper-Coles, "From Defence to Security: British Policy in Transition", *Survival*, Spring 1994, p. 146.

<sup>30</sup>E.L. Woodward, "The English at War", The Character of England, edited by Ernest Barker, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 530.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, p. 547.

century.<sup>32</sup> For hundreds of years prior to that, the fear of military despotism had made parliament suspicious of a standing army and unwilling to accept the establishment of barracks throughout the country. Britain relied on the potential might of its militia as its homeguard, and only mustered a sizable force when there was a specific threat to confront abroad. This lack of a truly professional army, in continental terms, resulted, at the beginning of nearly every war, in tales of expeditions hastily sent out, badly equipped, poorly led, and often serving no wide strategic purpose.<sup>33</sup>

How ironic then that an unmilitary people with such an aversion to war and indifference to conquest abroad would end up amassing one of the great empires in modern times, while compiling an incredible military record along the way. It is not quite as surprising, however, after once again reflecting on the role that geography played in the development of the British Empire.

The colonial period rewarded those nations with sufficient resources to undertake forays to distant lands. An essential part of the necessary imperialist capital was a

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid, p. 545. Woodward explains that a change in public perceptions regarding the military came about after the revelations of the intensity of the Boer War.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, pp. 536-7.

significant maritime capability. Such a requirement fit nicely into British designs, for the British had always deemed a strong navy to be the most critical physical element of their island defense:

Upon this control of the sea every argument about British defences ultimately turns. This fact has never been forgotten--indeed it has been too obvious to be ignored.<sup>34</sup>

The dawn of the age of imperialism and the rise of the "Pax Britannica"<sup>35</sup> therefore reflected a basic change in the defensive nature of British maritime power. As the British Empire expanded, the Royal Navy became more important to the economic well-being of both the nation and the colonies. As British interests became global, the sea lanes to the overseas possessions became more important. The Royal Navy became a familiar sight in far off ports as Britain took an interest in the various strategic waterways of the world.

Imperialism has been regarded by many as immoral and reprehensible, but the British saw this differently. In fact, many of the British viewed their colonial activities as being quite the opposite. Many of the British believed that the areas falling under *their* influence would benefit immensely from the exposure to British ideals:

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 538.

<sup>35</sup>David French refers to the pax Britannica as the period 1815-1880.



Commerce, Christianity, and civilization were synonymous to the Victorians. If missionaries brought Christianity to non-Christians they believed they would not only show them the path to eternal life but also the way to unlimited social and economic progress.<sup>36</sup>

This British sense of mission, a belief in promoting religion, civilization and economic well-being, was alive in British imperial undertakings, and was influenced by the Puritan movement of the early seventeenth century which saw the persecuted Pilgrims "establish new lands beyond the sea" in a quest to "fulfill the mission that God had given them."<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the writings of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Robert Seely (1834-95), Sir Charles Dilke (1843-1911) and Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) all contained elements of the moral acceptance of the British "mission."<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, the expanse of British territory and the continued successes in the inevitable overseas wars that emerged in this period did nothing to shake the British attitude of confidence, but rather reinforced the belief that British military undertakings were doubtless for the good of all concerned:

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<sup>36</sup>French, p.121.

<sup>37</sup>Ezra Hoyt Byington, The Puritan as a Colonist and Reformer, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1899), p. 5.

<sup>38</sup>Hermann Kinder and Werner Hilgemann, The Anchor Atlas of World History, Volume II, (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 103.

Critics of England may be exasperated by our bland acceptance of empire and repudiation of imperialism; nevertheless the significant fact is that this immense extension of their political sovereignty did not give the English a military turn of mind and that the English tradition, the 'deposit' of all these wars, has been one of defence against tyranny and aggression.<sup>39</sup>

And while it is obvious that not every people subjected (or, in some cases, subjugated) to British influence relished the experience, the important point for the purposes of this analysis is that the British believed in their self-assigned mission. They considered themselves to be a good example of moral behavior and naturally felt that their own standards should be impressed upon those subject to their rule.

This appeal to morality in external affairs of state also permeated the British political system and manifested itself mainly in the foreign policy objectives of the Liberal and Labour parties. The question of morality in foreign affairs confronted British statesmen in many different forms, and many were able to elude it entirely. Yet one of the most famous Liberal Prime Ministers in British history--William Ewart Gladstone--confronted the issue head-on in a speech given in 1879, during his famous Midlothian campaign (he would become the Prime Minister in

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<sup>39</sup>Woodward, p. 531.

1880). In the speech, Gladstone articulated his "six principles" of dealing with foreign policy issues. The final two of these points concerned the "equality of nations" and the "love of freedom."<sup>40</sup>

Gladstone deemed his fifth point--the equality of nations--to be of primary importance. An excerpt of this point illustrates the type of idealistic convictions in British politics that would lead to a belief in the mission of international institutions such as the League of Nations and later, the U.N. Gladstone stated that all nations should be treated as equals:

...because, without recognizing that principle, there is no such thing as public right, and without public international right there is no instrument available for settling the transactions of mankind except material force. Consequently the principle of equality among nations lies, in my opinion, at the very basis and root of a Christian civilization, and when that principle is compromised or abandoned, with it must depart our hopes of tranquility and of progress for mankind...<sup>41</sup>

In discussing his sixth point, the "love for freedom" passage, Gladstone invoked the names of previous British statesmen who had achieved foreign policy successes while championing the cause of freedom:

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<sup>40</sup>Temperley and Penson, pp. 390-4.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, pp. 393-4.

...the foreign policy of England should always be inspired by the love of freedom...in freedom you lay the firmest foundations both of loyalty and order; the firmest foundations for the development of individual character, and the best provision for the happiness of the nation at large. In the foreign policy of this country the name of Canning will ever be honoured. The name of Palmerston will be honoured by those who recollect the erection of the Kingdom of Belgium, and the union of the disjoined provinces of Italy. <sup>42</sup>

Prior to leaving the subject of morality in international politics altogether, it is important to note that there is a scholarly school of thought which suggests that two of the British traits already described--the impregnability of the fortress England and the current of morality in foreign affairs--are inextricably linked:

[Martin] Wight reached conclusions parallel to those of [Arnold] Wolfers regarding the importance of security as a virtual precondition for perceiving moral opportunities. Wolfers attributed the differences he discerned between Anglo-American philosophies of 'choice' and continental European philosophies of 'necessity' to the greater vulnerability to attack of the continental nations. An 'insular location', Wolfers maintained, gave Britain and the United States 'freedom to remain aloof from many international struggles without a sacrifice of national security, and thus...the chance of keeping one's hands clean of many of the morally more

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid, p. 393.

obnoxious vicissitudes of power politics  
to which others were subjected'.<sup>43</sup>

Another characteristic of the British strategic culture developed as a consequence of the British imperial experience. The British view events abroad with the perspective of having had world-wide interests for several generations. Britain still views international events through the lens of a world power. The British have a global perspective on foreign affairs that has its roots in the multitude of issues that faced the Empire in its heyday.

That Britain was forced to retrench permanently from empire after World War Two is irrelevant. The mere fact that Great Britain had amassed such an empire compelled it to forever be concerned with events in its former colonies that had acquired independence and nationhood. After having cultivated many of these nation-states, in a developmental sense, the British could physically depart from them, but never sever their historical and emotional ties to them.

During the imperial period in particular, Britain would monitor affairs in these states, as well as in the surrounding areas of strategic importance, and intervene when it felt it appropriate to do so. A propensity to act

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<sup>43</sup>David S. Yost, "Political Philosophy and the Theory of International Relations", *International Affairs*, April 1994, p. 279.

in such instances can be attributed, in large part, to a historical responsibility Britain felt for having been a part of the initial, modern development of a particular region. This continuing desire to influence matters "East of Suez" has lessened since World War Two but has been a fundamental pillar of British strategic culture, and one which can potentially still justify British intervention in many areas of the world today.<sup>44</sup>

Most of the principles discussed thus far can stand alone as traits and some could apply to many different nations. It is the specific combination of these national traits, however, in influencing decision-making, that helps to paint the portrait of the British national style in foreign affairs. In other words, Great Britain has displayed consistent tendencies in the formulation of its national policies; and these cardinal rules of British policy-making are founded upon basic concepts well-suited to ensure the security of the nation. These constant threads in the British national strategy have thus been permanently woven into the fabric of the strategic culture.

The first of these has to do with insuring the security of the fortress itself. It has already been noted here that

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<sup>44</sup>See "British Defence Policy: The Long Recessional", by Laurence W. Martin, *Adelphi Paper* no. 61, 1969, for a discussion of the waning ability of Great Britain to act "East of Suez."

Britain traditionally relied on its mastery of the waves to ensure its ultimate security for "only an island power could afford to lose every battle except the last."<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, Britain has always realized that certain conditions on the continent could put it in a position of having to test that theory, and London has therefore sought to prevent the emergence of those conditions.

The conditions referred to above have to do with the occupation or conquering of the "low countries" of Belgium and the Netherlands. These lands have not only provided key ports for British commerce, but also have been viewed, and rightly so, as staging areas that could facilitate an invasion across the channel by an aggressive continental power. Hence, British policy has been influenced accordingly:

...our [British] attitude towards continental powers has always been vitally affected by *their* attitude to the Low Countries....Alike in the days of Elizabeth, of William III, of Napoleon, of William II, of the Third Reich, we could not, and cannot view with indifference the control of Antwerp and Rotterdam, of the Dutch and Flemish coasts, by an alien Great Power....<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Woodward, p. 532.

<sup>46</sup>Seton-Watson, p. 36. In addition, the origins of this constant in British policy are discussed in more detail in the neutrality chapter (one) of Volume III of The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, edited by Sir A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923).

Winston Churchill's assessment of this historical continuity in British policy is prioritized slightly differently in that, in the following statement, he speaks first of opposing the resident continental aggressor before mentioning the Low Countries:

For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent, and particularly to prevent the Low Countries falling into the hands of such a power.<sup>47</sup>

This leads directly to the next aspect of this traditional British policy in Europe--the desire to maintain a balance of power on the continent. Great Britain has been acutely aware that the rise of a continental hegemon would be an immediate economic and security threat. One of the first modern examples of this concern was the War of the Spanish Succession.

In this conflict, which began on 15 May 1702, England, in the newly-formed Grand Alliance with Austria and the Dutch Republic, went to war against France for what would become a recurring theme, only to involve different nations, in the future:

England's basic aims in entering the war were to secure her own safety, to prevent foreign interference in the

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<sup>47</sup>Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), p. 207.



revolution settlement, and to secure and maintain her trade abroad. In order to achieve these goals, English statesmen believed that there must be a balance of power in Europe which would hinder any one nation from interfering with the normal development of another nation....The major and immediate threat to obtaining this political solution in Europe was posed by the potential growth of French power through the inheritance of the Spanish throne by the French King's grandson, Philip.<sup>48</sup>

Thus continued the established tradition in British history of maintaining a balance of power on the continent as the surest means to insure British economic and military security. The British made a decision in each instance to maintain this coveted balance by siding with the seemingly weaker continental contingent. Once again the themes of morality and idealism are present in Churchill's synopsis of this foreign policy tradition:

...it would have been easy and must have been very tempting to join with the stronger and share the fruits of his conquest. However, we always took the harder course, joined with the less strong Powers, made a combination among them, and thus defeated and frustrated the Continental military tyrant whoever he was, whatever nation he led. Thus we preserved the liberties of Europe...and emerged...with the Low Countries safely protected in their independence. Here

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<sup>48</sup>Paul Kennedy, Grand Strategies in War and Peace, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 19.

is the wonderful unconscious tradition  
of British foreign policy.<sup>49</sup>

Great Britain, the island nation, has always realized that its fate has been inextricably linked to events on the continent. What is fascinating about British history, however, is the way in which the British have consistently been able to concern themselves with Europe only when the time was ripe, though some may argue overripe, for their intervention there. This too was a strategic cultural pillar in their foreign policy-making charter--to avoid contractual alliances on the continent, in order to insure the greatest possible flexibility when the moment came for action:

The desire for isolation, the knowledge  
that it is impossible--these are the two  
poles between which the needle of the  
British compass continues to waver.<sup>50</sup>

Gladstone referred to this aversion to standing alliances when listing his six principles of British foreign policy in 1879, referred to earlier. Gladstone called them "entangling engagements" and submitted that their formation would increase commitments without increasing strength, which in essence would reduce the nation's strength.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Churchill, pp. 207-8.

<sup>50</sup>Seton--Watson, p. 37.

<sup>51</sup>Temperley and Penson, p. 392.

In summary, the following strategic cultural continuities can be observed in the record of British diplomacy from 1702 onward: striving to maintain a balance of power in Europe; avoiding peacetime entangling alliances until they became wartime necessities; opposing the rise of a hegemonic power on the continent; and preventing that same power from acquiring the Low Countries; were assimilated into an accepted paradigm of British foreign policy. That this policy was maintained for the better part of three centuries makes it a fundamental part of the British strategic culture. David French adequately summarizes this point:

...British security rested on a stable balance of power in Europe. Britain only intervened directly in continental affairs when the balance of power was in jeopardy because of the danger that one power or a coalition of powers was about to go to war to impose their hegemony on their neighbours. At other times Britain remained aloof from entangling European alliances so she could devote resources to expanding her interests outside Europe. Quincy Wright argued that the pursuit of the balance of power became part of the doctrine of British foreign policy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and was formally recognized as the basis of the Peace of Utrecht. Neutrality at all other times was advantageous to Britain

because 'to be able to remain neutral is to hold the balance of power.'<sup>52</sup>

A more recent addition to British strategic culture has been the aversion to appeasement in foreign affairs since the Munich debacle of 1938. Some view Chamberlain's decisions in 1938 as part of a plan to "buy" Britain another year to prepare for war with the Germans. Yet another account of the pre-World War Two years depicts Chamberlain as a leader attempting to avoid war altogether by treading lightly with Nazi Germany, despite increasing evidence of its brutality and lawlessness.<sup>53</sup>

Appeasement in foreign policy had been nothing new to British statesmen on the eve of World War Two. In fact they had employed it to their advantage before. But its subsequent and dramatic failure in containing German ambitions after 1938 resulted in it no longer being considered a viable option for the future:

Its (appeasement's) success in the five years between 1902 and 1907 enabled Britain to wage a war which brought her to the peak of her Imperial power. Its failure in the five years between 1934 and 1939 resulted in a conflict which

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<sup>52</sup>French, pp. xii-xiii. The Peace of Utrecht was the settlement after the War of the Spanish Succession discussed earlier. The Quincy Wright statement is from his book, A Study of War, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 19420, Vol. I, p. 636.

<sup>53</sup>Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, The Appeasers, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), pp. xi-xiv.

led to the disintegration of her Empire and which might, but for mistakes of her adversaries, have resulted in her own subjugation to an alien and very much less tolerable imperial rule.<sup>54</sup>

The last tenet of British strategic culture to be discussed here is also a relatively recent development on the British diplomatic scene. This is the "special relationship"<sup>55</sup> that has existed between the United States and Great Britain in this century. Scarcely evident in the inter-war years because of American isolationism,<sup>56</sup> this unofficial partnership intensified during the struggle against Nazi Germany, and then continued throughout the Cold War. The unique cooperation between the two nations in the area of political-military affairs was most prominent in, but not limited to, the areas of naval operations, nuclear weapons, and intelligence matters.<sup>57</sup>

Paul Kennedy suggests that it was Churchill who first cultivated the relationship through his dealings and correspondence with Roosevelt prior to the American entrance

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<sup>54</sup>Michael Howard, The Continental Commitment, (London: Temple Smith, 1972), p. 29.

<sup>55</sup>See The 'Special Relationship' Anglo-American Relations Since 1945, edited by William Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) for a complete discussion of the evolution of this "alliance."

<sup>56</sup>Louis and Bull, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup>Louis and Bull, especially pp. 117-28 and 151-9.

into the war.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, Kissinger suggests that American entrance into the war alongside the allies had much to do with the "strong cultural ties between England and America, for which there was no counterpart in U.S.-German relations."<sup>59</sup>

After the end of the war the relationship prospered in terms of political rhetoric praising its existence on both sides of the Atlantic;<sup>60</sup> but more importantly it has had concrete benefits to both sides. Kissinger even suggests that the Suez Crisis of 1956 had a solidifying effect on the relationship in that Britain. Humbled by the diplomatic humiliation at the hands of the non-supportive U.S. government during the crisis, Britain accepted de facto her junior role in the alliance and opted to strengthen the partnership with America so as to gain maximum influence over future decisions that would essentially be made in Washington.<sup>61</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the reunification of an economically powerful Germany may prove yet to be the greatest test of the strength of the Anglo-American

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<sup>58</sup>Kennedy, p. 52.

<sup>59</sup>Henry Kissinger, Diplomacy, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), p. 43.

<sup>60</sup>Louis and Bull, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup>Kissinger, pp. 548 and 597.

friendship. Whether Britain remains America's preeminent political-military partner is still in question. Today's Balkan conflict may hold part of the answer.

### III. BRITAIN'S HISTORICAL INTERESTS IN THE BALKANS

#### A. INTRODUCTION

British military history in general conjures familiar images to those with a rudimentary knowledge of the important events that marked it. Decisive naval battles with long-time rival France come to mind, as do more recent struggles this century against expansionist Germany. Yet the annals of Great Britain, and British foreign policy, have been colored by events from all corners of the globe. The Balkan Peninsula is but a single region where British interests have lain over the years but, as one vital part of the complicated Eastern Question, its historical significance in influencing British policy is undisputed:

...the Eastern Question, which in its later phase may be defined as the problem of how to fill the vacuum created by the shrinkage and decay of the once conquering Ottoman Empire. To those that consider that undue space has been accorded to the Eastern Question in [British] history, or to those who hesitate to include it among the catalogue of British interests, it should be sufficient to rejoin that no less than eleven times in the last hundred years were we involved in major international crises owing to complications in the Near East. Neither the Iberian nor the Italian Peninsula, neither Germany nor the Hapsburg Monarchy, have proved to be so persistently and inextricably interwoven with every imaginable issue of foreign policy, as have the issues involved in



the fate of Turkey and her former vassals.<sup>62</sup>

A concise examination of British involvement in Balkan affairs follows. It will be seen that Great Britain's historical behavior there has been the result of a combination of many factors, depending upon the specific period. Moreover, when determining British policies in the Balkans, statesmen have always kept traditional national interests in mind but have fallen prey to the influence of strategic cultural considerations on several occasions.

#### B. THE RISE OF THE PAX BRITANNICA

The [Balkan] peninsula is a crossroads between Europe, Asia, and Africa. Here the peoples and cultures of three continents have met and mingled, or clashed and conquered. The major powers of each historical epoch have made their influence felt here and have left their mark upon the peoples. The great imperial powers of the past--Greeks, Romans, Turks, Venetians, Austrians, Germans, British, and Russians--all in their turn have dominated or sought to dominate the area.<sup>63</sup>

That the Jelavichs chose to omit the "Soviets" from this group probably had more to do with their prefacing the collection with the word "imperial" than to any oversight on their part, for the Soviet "Empire" definitely extended into

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<sup>62</sup>Seton-Watson, pp. 648-9.

<sup>63</sup>Charles and Barbara Jelavich, The Balkans, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 2-3.

the Balkans as well. Nonetheless, this ominous assessment of Balkan history reveals that the nations and peoples of the Balkans have been subjugated by numerous powers through the centuries in part due to the mere misfortune of their geographic placement in the world.

If for no other immediate reason then, the major historical world powers have been able to conveniently justify their interest in the Balkans based on its strategic location alone. Great Britain is certainly no different in this regard. The Balkans became an area of significance for British foreign policy during the age of imperialism, and more specifically, the rise of the "Pax Britannica."<sup>64</sup>

During this period the British established a global empire that became the envy of the other powers. In 1793 Britain possessed twenty-six colonies. By 1815 she had forty-three and in the next fifty years the empire expanded by an average of 100,000 square miles each year!<sup>65</sup> The Royal Navy facilitated this impressive territorial growth yet there existed certain areas where the maintenance of secure overland commerce routes was as important to the British economy as the protection of the sea lanes. The

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<sup>64</sup>French, p. 119. French lists the era of Pax Britannica as existing from 1815-1880.

<sup>65</sup>French, p. 124.

Balkans proved to one such area and British interest in the region magnified accordingly.

### C. THE EASTERN QUESTION

In addition, the Balkans became a source of concern to Great Britain in this time frame for another reason that was more political in nature. Great Britain and the other great European powers of the day--Austria, France, and Russia--began concerning themselves with the "Eastern Question."<sup>66</sup> At the heart of this Eastern question was the impending collapse of the centuries-old Ottoman Empire.

By the late eighteenth century it became apparent that the central government in Constantinople was beginning to lose its political grasp on some areas of its vast holdings. Ottoman power and prestige had peaked centuries before during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566). However, following his regime, the Empire was plagued by a succession of ineffectual rulers and the government began to weaken from the center. The decline in the central government was accompanied by a gradual increase in

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<sup>66</sup>Norman Rich, Why the Crimean War? A Cautionary Tale, (Hanover: University Press of New England), 1965, pp. 20-21, The term *Eastern Question* was used by statesmen of the nineteenth century to refer to problems in the Balkans and the Near East. There was no uniform definition of the geographical area covered by the Eastern Question, but there was general agreement that it embraced the Balkan and Black sea regions, Asia Minor as far as the Caucasus Mountains in the east and the Red Sea in the west, and the eastern part of North Africa, Egypt in particular.

corruption throughout the entire administration, as well as a deterioration in the once-feared Ottoman Armies.<sup>67</sup>

This loosening of authority within the Ottoman Empire could not have come at a worse juncture for the reigning Sultans of the period. The French Revolution had brought a new spirit to Europe and the ideology of the time, fostered through a literary and cultural awakening, gave a theoretical justification to Balkan rebellion. The forces of Nationalism and Liberalism set Europe alight with revolutionary fire and the flames were to engulf the Balkans as well.<sup>68</sup>

Independence movements began to emerge in several areas under Ottoman control. In general, Britain would try to support such movements as much as possible given the prevailing circumstances of the day. The explicit support and sympathy that the British displayed toward the emerging liberal movements reflected a commonly held belief in Britain that the self-determination of peoples and respect for individual rights were the cornerstones of civilized societies. This idealistic attitude would not, however, eliminate the requirement for British statesmen to view each

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<sup>67</sup>Jelavich and Jelavich, pp. 25-31.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid, pp. 44-6.

such situation with an eye toward overall strategic British interests in the subject region.

Serbia was first to gain its autonomy from the Ottoman Empire in 1815. This was the Serbs' second attempt at emancipation in that century, the first one having been crushed by the Turks in 1813. Russian support proved to be the decisive difference in Serbia's second quest for semi-independence. With Napoleon having met his final demise, Russia was in a much better position to act as the self-proclaimed sponsor and protector of Balkan Orthodox Christianity (a reason that Russia would perpetually cite for future intervention in the Balkans as well).

As a result of Russian posturing during the second Serbian uprising, the Sultan capitulated and Serbia became an autonomous state within the Ottoman Empire. This event transpired with little repercussion throughout the remainder of Europe, however, as the existence of landlocked Serbia appeared to be no threat to the interests of the other powers.<sup>69</sup>

The second rebellious movement, however, took place in Greece beginning in April of 1821, and marked the first serious incursion into Balkan politics by Great Britain. The ironic twist in this undertaking was that although

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid, pp. 35-48.

Britain would cite what would become its consistent reason for concern over Balkan affairs--free and safe access to the Eastern Mediterranean--they would also find themselves, in this first Balkan entanglement, aligned with the very nation whose influence in the area they would spend the rest of the century trying to counter--Tsarist Russia.

Great Britain's interests in the Eastern Mediterranean centered around free and safe passage through the area as opposed outright control of the seas there. The British saw parts of their Empire in the Middle East, and more importantly India, as threatened if any power should exert maritime predominance in the Eastern waters. During a stalemate in the conflict, Egypt appeared to be in a position to do just that when it responded to the Ottoman call for help in suppressing the rebellious Greeks. The Egyptian forces scored immediate successes against the Greeks and began to acquire key islands in the Aegean. But because neither the British nor the Russians wished Egypt to dominate the Eastern Mediterranean, the two governments cooperated in an effort to counter the Egyptian presence.<sup>70</sup>

They did this in dramatic fashion in September of 1827, when, after having solicited the assistance of France as

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid, p. 49.

well, the newly combined, three-nation allied fleet set up a blockade to prevent Egyptian and Turkish vessels from advancing on Greek-rebel held territory. Shortly thereafter, in October, the allied fleet confronted their Turko-Egyptian counterpart force in Navarino Bay. Predictably, a battle ensued culminating in a victory for the European allies with fifty-seven ships of the Turkish-led fleet on the bottom and over eight thousand lives lost.<sup>71</sup>

The fallout from this naval battle was responsible for the advent of the Russo-Turkish War of 1828. Public opinion in Constantinople, enraged over the incident at sea, especially since there had been no declarations of war among any of the nations involved, forced the Sultan to confront the Allies. Most of the ensuing Ottoman anger was directed toward the Russians--who were viewed by Constantinople as having led the allied effort--and a land war commenced between Russia and the Ottoman Turks.<sup>72</sup>

The Tsar's forces prevailed on the battlefield and the resultant Treaty of Adrianople in 1829 gave Russia increased influence of a protective nature in the Balkans, mainly in

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<sup>71</sup>Barbara Jelavich, History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Volume I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 226.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid, p. 227.

the Danubian Principalities. The Tsar, however, deferred to his earlier allies with regard to the resolution of the Greek situation. Thus the follow-on London Protocol of 1830 enabled Britain to curtail any further Russian political gains in the region by declaring Greece to be a fully independent state.<sup>73</sup> The alternative would have been an autonomous Greek nation, under the administration of the Porte<sup>74</sup> but with security guarantees from Russia; such an arrangement was viewed by the British as an undue extension of Russian influence in the Balkans, all the more so because of Greece's strategic maritime location. And so by 1833, with an appointed monarch of Bavarian descent on the throne, the modern Greek nation was born.<sup>75</sup>

Of singular significance among the many events that unfolded during both the Greek Revolution and Russo-Turkish War was the conscious knowledge on the part of the Tsar that his successful alliance with Great Britain only came about because of the coalescing interests of the two nations at the time. Nicholas I and his ministers realized that the

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<sup>73</sup>Jelavich and Jelavich, pp. 47-53.

<sup>74</sup>Jelavich and Jelavich, p.35. The Ottoman Empire was regularly referred to in diplomatic correspondence as the Porte. The Sublime Porte was the designation for the Gateway leading to the building which contained the principal offices of the government in Constantinople.

<sup>75</sup>Barbara Jelavich, vol. I, pp. 227-229.



arrangement with the British had been temporary, and that the surest way to erase their recent cooperation would be by menacing British interests as Egypt had just done:

The Russian leaders were aware that Constantinople could not be occupied even if the Russian Armies were in a position to take the city. Despite the fact that they had cooperated with Britain and France in the Greek Question, they fully recognized the limits that had to be placed on their ambitions.<sup>76</sup>

This infatuation that the British had for Constantinople was not over the city itself, but rather the Straits that it commanded. Once again the chief British fear was the potential threat to the Eastern Mediterranean that could be posed by a hostile Russia in possession of the Dardenelles and Bosphorus waterways. As such, provisions dealing with the straits were contained in nearly every major European Treaty in the nineteenth century.<sup>77</sup>

Equally important from the British cultural perspective was the sympathy that was generated within the British public for the cause of the Greek rebels. Aside from the

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid, p. 227.

<sup>77</sup>Temperly and Penson, pp.119, 123, 135, 331, 469, 362-4, 381-2, 454-61. Also see J.A.R. Marriot, The Eastern Question: An Historical Study in European Diplomacy, (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 277. The British aim with respect to the Straits reflected the ancient rule of the Ottoman Empire according to which the Dardenelles and Bosphorus were closed to foreign ships of the line, so long as the Porte was at peace.

moral righteousness of the Greek rebels' cause, there existed in Britain a romantic Philhellenic<sup>78</sup> movement that exerted a substantial influence on the political leaders and educated public. The Greek revolutionaries were portrayed as the direct descendants of the mythological heroes of the ancient world while the Ottoman forces were thought of as brutal barbarians who were inflicting unprovoked terror on innocent and civilized victims.<sup>79</sup>

So while access to, and safe passage through the waters of the Eastern Mediterranean was seen as a tangible British interest, necessary to safeguard commerce and colonies, the morality of the Greek movement toward self-determination also appealed to the British in a cultural sense. Consequently, the British decision to intervene in the Greek revolution can be viewed as a situation where both fundamental national interests and strategic cultural considerations called for similar policy. Unfortunately for British statesmen this pattern would not repeat itself in every future Balkan scenario.

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<sup>78</sup>Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Tenth Edition) defines Philhellenic as being an admiration of Greece or the Greeks. This movement centered mainly on the cultural contribution that ancient Greece had made to humanity in the shape of literature, philosophy, the arts, science and architecture.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid, p.224.

#### D. RUSSIA AND BRITAIN AND THE CRIMEAN WAR

A shift in the paradigm of British strategic thinking occurred as a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1828. France, Britain's traditional enemy over the previous two centuries, was viewed with less concern since the defeat of Napoleon and the establishment of the Concert of Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. At first the British approved of the arrangement for the mechanics of the Concert seemed suited to blunt any attempt at hegemony on the continent while still allowing Britain some freedom to act if the balance of power prove threatened.

But the new threat to British security now lay further inland as the Eastern Question became more pronounced with the defeat of the Ottomans in the Russo-Turkish war. It became evident to Great Britain that the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire, albeit in an already weakened condition, would be critical to preventing a Russian domination of the Balkans and the Near East:

...in the late 1820s the French bogey began to be replaced by the Russian bogey. The government in London feared an external threat and suffered nightmares that if Turkey collapsed under Tsarist pressure or if Persia fell under her domination, Russian troops might march down the Euphrates, establish a naval base at the head of

the Persian Gulf and cut Britain's communications with India.<sup>80</sup>

This fear of Russian expansion was to become a guiding principle for British foreign policy in the Balkans thereafter and one of the main reasons that Britain became involved in the disagreements between Turkey and Russia that eventually led to the Crimean War in 1854. Although not a battle over the Balkans per se, Russian occupation of territory there was one the catalysts of hostilities:

The Aberdeen government went to war against Russia in March 1854 because the Russians had occupied the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia and because their attack on the Turkish fleet at Sinope in November 1853 had demonstrated that Russia was now a major naval power that threatened British naval supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The government sought to destroy Russian naval power in the Black Sea and to prevent the Russians advancing farther in the Balkans.<sup>81</sup>

Meanwhile, to assist in drumming up public support at home, the opposition to Russia was also portrayed by the government as a moral struggle. In a speech before the House of Lords in March of 1854, Foreign Minister Clarendon spoke of checking the unjust aggression of Russia and securing a peace honorable to Turkey. By this time the Russians had already scored a lopsided naval victory at

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<sup>80</sup>French, p.123.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid, p. 132.

Sinope over a severely outgunned Turkish expedition. This "massacre," as it was then called by the British press, stoked the war fires in Britain.<sup>82</sup>

Clarendon continued in his speech by depicting the upcoming struggle as one of civilization against barbarism, and submitted that if Britain did not intervene, other nations might suffer the same fate as Poland had at the hands of the Russians in 1830.<sup>83</sup> It seems as though the historic British labelling of barbarians in the Near East varied at times, depending on which nation threatened their interests there.

The Crimean War ended with a victory by the allied coalition of Britain, France, Austria and Turkey, yet Russia was not decisively defeated in the war despite a staggering number of casualties, even by Russian standards. Nonetheless, the overall poor performance of the Russian military fostered a comprehensive social and economic reform movement by the Tsar's government which would lead to a more modern "western" army in the future.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Harold Temperly, England and the Near East, the Crimea, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., LTD., 1936), pp. 370-5.

<sup>83</sup>Rich, pp. 107-8. This was in reference to the Tsar's brutal repression of a revolt in Poland during that year.

<sup>84</sup>Rich, pp. 206-7.

The Ottoman Empire had thus been preserved, through the efforts of the allied coalition in the Crimean War, but its ability to hold together indefinitely was in serious doubt. British statesmen realized that the Ottoman Empire was badly in need of reform in order to both placate the growing nationalist movements within it and improve its reputation abroad. Consequently, the British government was behind several liberal decrees announced by the Porte in both 1839 and 1856. The British hoped that "reform within the Ottoman Empire would make the state acceptable to all its subjects and that it would remain as a bulwark against Russian expansion."<sup>85</sup> Yet after centuries of oppressive rule in the Balkans under the Sultans, and in light of the recent successful independence movements there, more violent revolts against Ottoman rule in the Balkans proved to be but twenty years away.

#### **E. REALPOLITIK ARRIVES**

The Russian defeat in the Crimean War also signified a collapse in the Concert of Europe,<sup>86</sup> for Russia had been the

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<sup>85</sup>Jelavich and Jelavich, pp. 50-3.

<sup>86</sup>French, p. 122. Never a staunch supporter of pre-existing treaties that bound nations to predetermined actions in the event of a conflict, Britain was nonetheless a "signatory" to the Concert of Europe originally, but withdrew in the early 1820s when the Eastern powers tried to use it as a vehicle to repress liberal and nationalist movements on the continent.

main agent of enforcement during its operative period.<sup>87</sup>  
The stretch of comparable peace on the continent from 1815 was thus terminated and followed by a period of relative chaos which completely reorganized the European order by 1871, with Germany emerging as the strongest power.<sup>88</sup>

Thus began an era when European politics would be dominated by calculations of raw power and the national interest, or in a word, *Realpolitik*. German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck dominated continental diplomacy circles as alliances and counter-alliances became the order of the day for ensuring national security. Despite this new diplomatic strategy, and the emergence of a powerful, unified Germany, Great Britain adhered to her age old policies with regard to affairs across the channel, determined to avoid the commitments of an alliance unless one became necessary to confront a specific threat.<sup>89</sup>

Concurrently, while remaining aloof from any contractual obligations, the British continued to monitor Russian advances in the Balkans and Central Asia with concern. There was a rise in popularity of the Panslavic movement in Russia and the Balkans shortly after the

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid, pp. 3-4.

<sup>88</sup>Kissinger, p. 119.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, p. 145.

conclusion of the Crimean War.<sup>90</sup> This coincided nicely with Russia's previous declarations about safeguarding Christian Orthodoxy in the region, enabling Russia to conveniently use this more comprehensive cultural argument from then on to justify its intervention in Balkan affairs.

In 1875 a Balkan uprising once again focused international attention on the troubled region. An insurrection against Turkish rule in Hercegovina began in July of that year. An identical uprising then occurred almost immediately in neighboring Bosnia. Owing in part to the known difficulty in fighting in those regions, the reigning Sultan accepted the recommendation of the European powers and attempted to pacify the insurgents with decrees that would meet their demands. These were summarily rejected by the rebels who by now had little faith in declarations from Constantinople. Further attempts by the foreign governments to mediate among the parties proved futile and by May of the following year the conflict had spread to Bulgaria.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Panslavic doctrine called for the removal of all slavic people from foreign, that is, Ottoman or Hapsburg, rule and their organization into a federation of states in which Russia would take the leading role. See Barbara Jelavich, vol. I, p.353.

<sup>91</sup>Barbara Jelavich, vol. I, p. 354.



In the succeeding two months, Serbia and Montenegro joined in the fray which then forced the Ottoman Turks to either take the offensive or risk losing virtually all their territory in the Balkans. The Turks attacked ferociously, crushing the rebellion in Bulgaria in brutal fashion and stories of Turkish atrocities filtered throughout Europe. Simultaneously, Austria-Hungary and Russia discussed possible intervention in the conflict, as well as arrangements to be made at its conclusion. Russia at first refrained from involvement, but by the first of September, the Serbs had been completely defeated and sentiment in Russia for a confrontation with the Porte was growing.<sup>92</sup>

Russia made plans for war with Turkey but sought a final diplomatic settlement first, at British urging, through a conference of all the great powers at Constantinople in December of 1876. The powers presented the Turkish contingent with a series of reforms that included the partition of certain Balkan territories and the implementation of liberal policies throughout the region. The Porte responded by drawing up a new, supposedly liberal, constitution for the entire Ottoman Empire that would negate the need for the demands presented to them at the conference. Consequently, the Ottoman Regime rejected the

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid, p. 356.

entire conference as being an unnecessary undertaking, and it closed, on all accounts a failure, in January of the following year.<sup>93</sup>

After soliciting the conditional neutrality<sup>94</sup> of Austria and Great Britain, so as to preclude another Crimean episode, Russia declared war on Turkey on April 24, 1877, the government finally yielding to the pressures of the Panslav circles. After a difficult struggle, the Tsar's forces appeared to be poised to lay siege on the Ottoman capital. Fearing this emerging exigency, Britain dispatched a fleet, complete with landing force, to the Sea of Marmora to display their traditional, adamant stance opposing an outright Russian conquest of the city. The presence of the British forces, coupled with the Tsar's Army having been exhausted and decimated by casualties and disease, prompted the Russians to convince the even less fortunate Turkish side to come to terms in an armistice in January of 1878.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid, p. 356.

<sup>94</sup>Ward and Gooch, pp. 116-7. Austria-Hungary was promised Bosnia-Hercegovina as spoils in return for her neutrality, while Britain was reassured that Russia would, as usual, not threaten to undermine the maritime balance in the region by occupying Constantinople and dominating the Dardenelles or by threatening the Suez Canal area.

<sup>95</sup>George F. Kennan, The Decline of Bismarck's European Order, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 36.

The terms of any settlement were a concern to the British as their fleet had demonstrated, but strict opposition to Russia was not as popular at home as it had been during the Crimean period, when British national interests seemingly fell neatly in line with their moral convictions. Britain still sought to contain Russian expansion in the Balkans but she could no longer do so by painting the Russians as the barbarians.

Russia was now associated with the self-determining Panslav cause which elicited support among Britain at large. Conversely, the almost continual promise of reforms from the central government in Constantinople had never really materialized in practice over the years despite British prodding and urging; this combined with the recent specter of the "Bulgarian Horrors"<sup>96</sup> hampered the British government in any policy that would continue to support Turkish rule in the Balkans.<sup>97</sup> For its part, the Porte had thought it held "a permanent lien on British sympathy and support," and

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<sup>96</sup> The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, Volume III edited by Sir A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 105, including footnote. William Ewart Gladstone, four-time Prime Minister of Great Britain (1868-74, 1880-5, 1886, 1892-4) published a pamphlet in 1876 entitled *Bulgarian Horrors* in which he described the atrocities committed by the Turks in putting down the Bulgarian revolt.

<sup>97</sup> K.W.B. Middleton, Britain and Russia: An Historical Essay, (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1947), p. 65.

never fully realized that this had been contingent on the Ottoman Empire progressing toward acceptable civilized behavior, even in war.<sup>98</sup>

#### F. THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN

After the Armistice was concluded on January 31, Russian and Ottoman representatives met to negotiate a treaty to finalize their agreements. This effort produced the Treaty of San Stefano on March 3, 1878. This treaty was contested by Great Britain and Austria-Hungary as soon as its contents were known. Austria was shocked that while the treaty predictably called for a rearrangement of the borders of several Balkan states, it did not honor certain assurances that Russia had provided the Hapsburg government before the war.<sup>99</sup>

In Britain, a Cabinet Committee had met and issued a report for government circulation which protested several tenets of the treaty. Of prime concern to the British officials were the extension of a dominating Russian influence into the Balkans through the expansion of several of the Christian states (most notably Bulgaria) and the

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<sup>98</sup>Ward and Gooch, p. 107.

<sup>99</sup>Barbara Jelavich, vol. I, pp. 358-360.

stationing of Russian troops there, as well as new rules concerning the use of the Straits by ships of the line.<sup>100</sup>

As tensions mounted between Britain, Russia and Austria in the spring of 1878, it was decided that representatives from the countries should meet to discuss a resolution to the unpopular Treaty of San Stefano. The composition of this meeting then evolved into a comprehensive conference of all the major powers of Europe at which the contents of all existing treaties would be examined and considered for revision. The result was the Congress of Berlin, held in the new German capital on June 13 of 1878.

The voluntary host of the affair, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, described his role of mediator at the conference to be that of an "honest broker." In truth, the war scare had defused somewhat prior to the opening of the event due to secret negotiations between Britain, Russia, and Austria that already redressed informally several portions of the Treaty of San Stefano.<sup>101</sup>

Nonetheless, these points had to be finalized, and moreover, the Congress was an elaborate historical event which saw a formidable gathering of European statesmen

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<sup>100</sup>Foundations of British Foreign Policy, edited by Harold Temperly and Lillian M. Penson, (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1938), pp. 367-372.

<sup>101</sup>Kissinger, p. 154.

address numerous issues. When the conference had ended, Great Britain emerged as one of the "victors" without having taken part in any fighting. Foreign warships were precluded from transiting the Straits (a continued British goal to prevent Russian maritime influence in the Eastern Mediterranean); the British pressured the Ottoman government to relinquish control of the island of Cyprus; and Russian influence in the Balkans was reduced. The latter was achieved mainly through the substantial reduction in the size of the state of greater Bulgaria (as compared to the one created at San Stefano). <sup>102</sup>

After the Congress of Berlin, British interest in the Balkans waned for two primary reasons. The first was that British fears of Russian domination in the region did not come to pass as they had envisioned. The nationalist undercurrent in the Balkans had by this time weakened the Orthodox and Panslavic ties that Russia felt with the Balkan states. In addition, the representation of the small Balkan nations at Berlin (entrusted to Russia) had been virtually dismissed in importance in the talks among the great powers. These facts became apparent shortly after the conference when a Bulgarian nationalist movement began to make efforts toward redressing the Berlin division of their country.

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<sup>102</sup>Barbara Jelavich, vol. I, p. 361.

During a complicated, domestic political upheaval that lasted through the decade of the 1880s, Bulgaria absorbed the newly created Eastern Rumelia to its south. Russian subversion during the course of the crisis irritated Bulgarian nationalists, and caused permanent damage to their loyalty to the Tsar. And although normal relations with Moscow were restored by 1896, earlier British fears of Bulgaria becoming a huge Russian puppet state were temporarily assuaged, allowing the British to happily retreat from the many more convoluted Balkan political and territorial disputes that would stem from the indifference toward Balkan nationalism displayed by the powers at the Congress of Berlin.<sup>103</sup>

The second, and perhaps most important reason, for British retrenchment from the Balkans was that after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Balkans were no longer as important to British colonial and commercial concerns. India, the "crown jewel" of the British Empire, could now be reached expeditiously from the sea, reinforcing the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean, but relegating all other overland routes to a lesser category.

Moreover, in succeeding decades Britain would fear a more direct threat to India in the form of a Russian land

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid, pp. 366-373.

invasion through Afghanistan. Ironically, it has been suggested that Russia used this (perceived) threat to India as "a useful means of deterring the British from interfering with Russian interests elsewhere, especially in the Balkans."<sup>104</sup> Nonetheless, it would be decades before Great Britain would again concern itself with Balkan affairs--the Eastern Question, though not removed from the hearts of British liberals, would not capture as much attention in foreign affairs as it had earlier in the century.

#### G. THE END OF ISOLATION

The period between the Congress of Berlin and 1890 is generally viewed as an isolationist period in British foreign policy in regard to European affairs. Bismarck was, however, very active in this period (until his dismissal in 1890) in constructing alliances to safeguard the security of the Germany he had successfully united. Britain avoided entanglement in these accords despite direct attempts by Germany to engage her.<sup>105</sup>

Instead the British focused their attention mostly on their vast possessions across the globe, while continuing to

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<sup>104</sup>Middleton, pp. 73-74.

<sup>105</sup>Ward and Gooch, Volume III, 1866-1919, pp. 143-145, 245-6.



pursue her policy of "splendid isolation"<sup>106</sup> with regard to European affairs. The net result was British intervention in crises in both hemispheres through 1899, but, it would not be until the turn of the century that British concerns would again turn toward events on the Balkan peninsula.<sup>107</sup>

While the coming of the new century saw continued conflict in the Balkans, it witnessed another dramatic transformation in British foreign policy. This attitude change by British statesmen had its origins in the rupturing of the alliance system that German Chancellor Bismarck had so painstakingly constructed. Bismarck was dismissed from office in 1890 and shortly thereafter Germany refused to renew its Reinsurance Treaty with Russia--the most basic pillar of Bismarck's earlier foreign collaborations. This opened the way for Russia to seek security in the form of another alliance arrangement since the new German statesmen

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<sup>106</sup>The phrase "splendid isolation" is used here because of its historical acceptance. It was coined by Prime Minister-Lord Salisbury-in an 1896 speech but has been used out of context through the years. For a complete explanation see volume IV, pp. 85-6, of the Life of Marquis of Salisbury, by his daughter, Lady Gwendolen Cecil (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931).

<sup>107</sup>Ward and Gooch, Volume III, pp. 237-242. In what was a relatively minor affair, British Prime Minister Salisbury mediated peace discussions after the Graeco-Turkish War of 1897. In addition, in order to facilitate the peace, British troops were used to evict Turkish soldiers from Crete with the approval of the other great powers and with the direct assistance of France and Italy.

had chosen to instead maintain the Triple Alliance of 1882, which included Italy and Austria as the other signatories. Franco-Russian relations had improved greatly during the 1880s and after the diplomatic snub from Germany in 1890, the Russians wasted little time cultivating their new relationship with France. By 1894, Russia and France concluded a military pact and Bismarck's nightmare of a two-front war came one step closer to Berlin.<sup>108</sup>

Meanwhile Great Britain came out of her diplomatic dormancy largely due to the announcement by the German Kaiser in 1896 that his nation was about to embark upon a great naval construction campaign. This proclamation was seen in London as an immediate threat to Great Britain in that she regarded the seas as her domain, much the way certain continental powers saw some inland areas as their spheres of influence. Moreover any power possessing a navy equal in might to the British and capable of supporting a sizable landing force automatically became a potential threat to British security in the event of a European

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<sup>108</sup>A detailed study of the background of these events is contained within The Decline of Bismarck's European Order, Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890, by George F. Kennan, (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1979). For an abbreviated version see Gordon Craig, Europe Since 1815, (Orlando: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1961), pp. 305-6.

conflict. The naval issue would dominate relations with Germany thereafter until 1914.<sup>109</sup>

In addition, after Fashoda<sup>110</sup> had eliminated the Egyptian Question as an active foreign issue, there was no insuperable conflict of interest anywhere in the world between France and Great Britain. Furthermore, the British, long accustomed to finding the French in their way, began to discover in the 1890s that whenever they hoped to extend their possessions in Africa or the Pacific, the Germans were likely to appear and demand compensation.<sup>111</sup>

The net result of these new European developments was a reluctant yet seemingly necessary reentrance of Britain into the world of entangling alliances she so despised. By 1904 Britain had reached an agreement with France. And with France having come to terms with Russia ten years earlier, all that was left to complete a new three-way agreement was a pact between Great Britain and Russia. This came about in 1907 and the Triple Entente was born, immediately

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<sup>109</sup>Seton-Watson, p. 609.

<sup>110</sup>The details of the storied Fashoda crisis are of little importance here, suffice to say that it involved a showdown between a French force and a numerically superior British one which resulted in Britain becoming the dominant influence within Egypt.

<sup>111</sup>Craig, pp. 306-7.

confronting the Triple Alliance on the European chess-board.<sup>112</sup>

About the same time that Europe became polarized by the new alignments among the great powers, the nationalist undercurrents in the Balkans once again came to the front in the form of additional movements toward independence and self-determination. These events naturally spawned accompanying stories of severe oppression against particular ethnic groups. The importance of these events can not be understated, making it further useful to examine briefly the succession of Balkan crises that contributed to the consolidation of both opposing alliances, and the advent of World War One.

British sentiments again turned toward the Balkans for moral and humanitarian reasons when the plight of the peasants in the Turkish administered suzerainty of Macedonia became common knowledge. In the early 1900s, word spread of atrocities being committed against Macedonian peasants by Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, Albanian and Turkish nationalist groups, all seeking political preeminence in the region. The British contemplated some form of intervention but dismissed the idea after an internal uprising in Turkey in 1907 had a resounding echo in the Balkans. This revolt,

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<sup>112</sup>Ward and Gooch, Volume III, p. 366. The Triple Entente did not provide military guarantees in all instances.

organized by the "Young Turk" exiles in Western Europe succeeded in gaining a constitution in 1908 that would respect minority rights everywhere and "was hailed with delight throughout the Ottoman dominions, and the murdering bands disappeared as if by magic." The Young Turks also hoped that these reforms would reinvigorate the Turkish people and enable them to hold on to the remnants of their empire in a fashion that would be acceptable to all.<sup>113</sup>

#### **H. THE BALKANS AND WORLD WAR ONE**

The euphoria in Britain over what appeared to finally be liberal reform in Turkey was quickly overtaken by another event in 1908 that would sow the seeds of a World War. In that year, Austria annexed the provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina much to the displeasure of Russia, Turkey, Serbia and Great Britain. Ironically, in a bizarre sequence of diplomatic initiatives Russian foreign minister Ivolsky had helped to engineer the event, along with his Austrian counterpart Aehrenthal, only to have the Tsar reject it, mainly out of sensitivity to ultimate Serbian desires. A brief war scare followed which saw Germany and Austria poised against Russia. The crisis waned, however, as Russia, unprepared for war despite the potential support of

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<sup>113</sup>Ward and Gooch, Volume III, pp. 400-1.

the Triple Entente, backed down, and the annexation stood.<sup>114</sup>

Russia, Britain and Serbia were particularly aggravated over the Bosnian crisis. Russia had been embarrassed both by the handling of the affair in Vienna and Berlin, and by her inability, in her role as Panslavic protector, to adequately represent Serbian interests. Great Britain was also dismayed by the belligerent attitudes displayed in Berlin and Vienna during the unfolding of events. And Serbia was incensed over the acquisition by Austria of territory which Serbia regarded as being her own. Serbia had designs on Bosnia as part of a greater Serbia and had hoped to someday reverse the Berlin Treaty Article which allowed Austria to administer the area. This movement had become even more acute among Serbian nationalists after the pro-Hapsburg Serbian ruler Alexander was assassinated in 1903.<sup>115</sup>

The annexation of Bosnia convinced Belgrade that Austria's ultimate aims were to absorb Serbia as well. Consequently, in March of 1912, Serbia and Bulgaria (with Russian support) concluded a pact promising to aid each other in case of attack, to cooperate in repelling attempts

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<sup>114</sup>Kissinger, pp. 195-6. also Craig, pp. 313-4.

<sup>115</sup>Jelavich and Jelavich, pp. 72-3, also Middleton, pp. 97-100.

by great powers to acquire Balkan territory, and to follow a common policy vis-a-vis Turkey. Within a few months, both Greece and Montenegro had adhered to these articles, and the Balkan League had been formed.<sup>116</sup>

Although originally conceived to thwart Austrian aggression, the League saw an immediate opportunity for conquest by expelling the Turks from Europe. The Balkan powers declared war on the Turks in October of 1912 and quickly drove them back to the Straits. The great powers, including Great Britain, stepped in at this point and mediated a settlement complete with revised borders. The intervention prevented the war from expanding but, again, at the cost of much consternation among the Balkan nations--most notably Serbia, which was denied access to the Adriatic Coast at the insistence of Austria.<sup>117</sup>

Arguments then ensued among the victors as to the territorial spoils of their combined efforts. A mere month passed when war broke out again as a disgruntled Bulgaria attacked Serbia. This time Turkey and Rumania allied with the other members of the Balkan League and made short work

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<sup>116</sup>Craig, p. 316.

<sup>117</sup>Middleton, p. 99. The peace conference in London subsequently laid the groundwork for the permanent creation of the state of Albania in 1913 on the Adriatic Coast. Serbia was compensated for this act with interior land of lesser strategic value.

of the Bulgarian forces. As a result Bulgaria was forced to concede almost all gains from the first contest--a condition which left her extremely embittered. In contrast, the nations of Serbia, Rumania and Greece were encouraged by these successes and continued to look outward. After the cessation of hostilities, the Serbian premier said boldly, "the first round is won; now we must prepare for the second, against Austria."<sup>118</sup>

In the brief period between the end of the Balkan Wars and the coming of World War One, Russia and Austria-Hungary maneuvered for influence and position in every Balkan country.<sup>119</sup> The two European camps also became poised for what was viewed as an almost inevitable confrontation ahead. The diplomatic dam broke on June 14, 1914, in Sarajevo when a Serbian patriot named Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Austrian heir apparent, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his consort. Satisfied that the Serbian Government was behind the plot, Austria-Hungary wasted little time in declaring war on July 28, after dispatching an ultimatum to Belgrade that was impossible for Serbia to accept.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Craig, p. 317.

<sup>119</sup>Seton-Watson, p. 641.

<sup>120</sup>Middleton, pp. 100-101.



Any thoughts the British had of distancing themselves from the conflict eroded completely when Germany threw its full weight behind its ally, and struck out on two fronts. Austrian hegemony in the Balkans was one thing, Austro-German hegemony on the continent quite another:

Britain would not have allowed herself to be involved in war because of a Balkan struggle between Russia and Austria. But when France was drawn in, the issue affected British interests in a way too vital to ignore. The clinching argument was Germany's invasion of Belgium. Without that felony, as iniquitous as if not as inexcusable as Austria's attack on Serbia, British intervention might have been delayed.<sup>121</sup>

The most important feature to take away from the British experience in the Balkans in World War One was that it was largely unsuccessful. Diplomatic attempts were made to recruit several Balkan states (other than Serbia) or at least insure their neutrality throughout the war but this did not come to pass as a vengeful Bulgaria eventually sided with the Central Powers, conquered Serbia and provided the Central Powers with an effective link through the Balkans until the close of the war.<sup>122</sup>

Even more distressing were the disastrous British (and Allied) military campaigns in the Balkan vicinity at

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<sup>121</sup>Middleton, p. 103.

<sup>122</sup>Craig, pp. 339-340.

Gallipoli and Salonica. The Allies had hoped to gain control of the Dardenelles (from recent Central Power ally Turkey) and weaken the opposition by opening an additional front at the "soft underbelly"<sup>123</sup> of Europe in 1915. The failure of these efforts instead had the dual effect of demoralizing the allied troops and damaging British prestige within the colonies of the Eastern Empire.<sup>124</sup>

As for the Balkan states themselves, World War One had an emancipating effect of sorts in that it culminated with the dissolution of the three empires--Ottoman, Russian and Austro-Hungarian--that had most often directly intervened in Balkan affairs. Another outcome of the war was the appearance of a new state entity based on the Wilsonian concept of self-determination that was promoted at the Versailles peace conference while redrawing the map of Europe. This was of course the creation of a large Balkan nation titled the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>The term "soft underbelly" is attributed to Winston Churchill although his use of it in *Second World War* plans has gained more historical notoriety.

<sup>124</sup>Sir Michael Howard, The Continental Commitment, The Dilemma of British Defense Policy in the Era of the World Wars., (London: Temple Smith, 1972), pp. 53-73.

<sup>125</sup>Jelavich and Jelavich, pp. 80-2.

This country, which became Yugoslavia in 1929, joined Rumania, Albania, Greece and a defeated and smaller Bulgaria, to form the new geo-political makeup of the Balkan Peninsula. All five of these states suffered through tremendous internal political turmoil in the inter-war period. Eventually each one would end up with a royal dictatorship of a varying degree. Nonetheless, the only call to arms among them during this period was in Greece where an ill-advised foray into Asia Minor in 1921 led to a defeat of the Greek troops at the hands of a reforming Turkish Army, and the subsequent loss of spoils from the Versailles agreements.<sup>126</sup>

#### **I. THE BALKANS AND WORLD WAR TWO**

Great Britain remained aloof from Balkan affairs during the inter-war period, satisfied that its continued occupation of Cyprus guaranteed its maritime security concerns in the region. By the 1930s, political maneuvering had begun again in earnest on the continent to include a renewed interest by some, most notably France, Germany and Italy, in Balkan affairs. Yet these latest developments did not move the British any closer to joining in the current round of Balkan machinations for they were now only too familiar with the complexities and hidden dangers that

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid, pp. 85-100.

surrounded Balkan politics:

contention among powers closer at hand for predominance in Yugoslavia and the Balkans was observed by the British with interest--and usually with regret--but not until war loomed did the British see cause for involvement in so remote and intractable a region....Balkan diplomats were insufferably tiresome, Balkan politicians invariably tortuous, Balkan intrigues impenetrably deep and Balkan disputes inevitably insoluble.<sup>127</sup>

When war again came to Europe in 1939, the Balkans were once again largely a secondary concern to the major players. Hitler concentrated his efforts on swiftly dividing Poland with Stalin, and commencing his campaign against France. However, the early departure of France from the war, as well as the near loss of the British Expeditionary Force there, quickly changed the minds of the British with regard to the potential importance of diverting German efforts across the channel. The specter of an additional front somewhere, perhaps in the Balkans, was once again raised. Great Britain was in no position early on to commit a large number of troops to such an idea but did realize the importance of recruiting potential allies in such areas to preclude German

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<sup>127</sup>Mark C. Wheeler, Britain and the War for Yugoslavia, 1940-1943, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 6-7.

dominance there. And so the Balkans became strategically important once more.

But by the time the British focused their efforts on the Balkans, they were already operating at a disadvantage there. Albania had been successfully invaded by Italy in 1939. Rumania and Bulgaria had pledged their unofficial allegiance to the Axis early on in the fighting and would formerly join the same by 1942. Of these, Rumania was the most valuable to the German war machine because of its extensive oil reserves. Greece fell under attack by Italy in 1940 yet offered a stiff resistance and managed to bog down the Italian forces there. And with Hungary to the north already in the German camp, this left Yugoslavia as the only Balkan nation left for the British to cultivate.<sup>128</sup>

The genuine prospects for a British alliance with Yugoslavia seemed dim from the outset. Virtually surrounded by Axis controlled states, Yugoslavia had to consider its survival first, and that survival seemed to hinge on not instigating a confrontation with Germany. At the same time, however, Yugoslav ruler Prince Paul preferred the British to the Germans but was realistic in his assessment of both his own predicament, and the amount of concrete assistance Britain could actually provide in the way of men and

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<sup>128</sup>Jelavich and Jelavich, pp. 95-103.

machines. And so a difficult, if not futile, balancing act ensued as the Prince maintained official Yugoslavian neutrality while simultaneously attempting to placate the desires of the British and the demands of the Germans.<sup>129</sup>

In 1940, British intelligence agents began a campaign of subversion in Yugoslavia in an attempt to solicit the support of the masses and through them put pressure on the government to side with London. At first, the British concentrated their efforts in this regard toward influencing the Serb nationalists, discounting the other peoples of Yugoslavia as well as the political left.<sup>130</sup> The Serbs, British allies in the last war against Germany, were eager to hold a coup and establish a pro-British government in Belgrade. London warned them against this twice in 1940, fearing that such an action would divert too much German power to the Balkans, forcing them to overrun the area on their way to rescue Mussolini in Greece. London instead preferred Belgrade's neutrality so that the Yugoslavian forces could be better put to use once the tide of the war had turned.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>Wheeler, pp. 10-33.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid, pp. 10-33.

But the situation changed in early 1941. It became obvious that Hitler would soon intervene to salvage the Italian forces in Greece. At the same time increased pressure was being applied to Belgrade by Berlin. Hitler was demanding that Yugoslavia take a position in the conflict. The British now sensed the criticality of immediate Yugoslavian military intervention, and made last ditch attempts to prevent the Yugoslav submission to German might.

All channels of communication were utilized, including correspondence between the Sovereigns of each nation, as well as between Churchill and Yugoslavian Premier Cvetkovic. In a dispatch on 22 March the Prime Minister implored his counterpart in Belgrade to bear in mind Britain's (and America's) certain ultimate victory. He continued by threatening that, "if Yugoslavia were at this time to stoop to the fate of Rumania, or commit the crime of Bulgaria, and become an accomplice in the attempted assassination of Greece, her ruin will be certain and unrepairable." Churchill then appealed to their military value at this crucial moment, stating that, "the history of war has seldom

shown a finer opportunity than is open to Yugoslav armies if they seize it while time remains."<sup>132</sup>

Despite these efforts the Prince remained inclined to sign the Axis Tripartite Pact (minus the military clauses) in order to prevent the destruction of his country at the hands of the Wehrmacht. The Premier and Foreign Minister thus acted on behalf of the Prince in signing the amended Tripartite Pact March 25, 1941 in Vienna. This regrettable event having transpired, the British resigned themselves to changing the government in Belgrade as the only means left of propelling the Yugoslavs into the war on the side of the allies. A coup d'etat occurred on March 27, but was carried out unexpectedly by Yugoslav military leaders instead of the nationalist groups that British agents had been nurturing.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid, p. 45. Churchill was referring to the possible employment of Yugoslavian troops against Italy which would have guaranteed the removal of the Italian military from the Balkans since their position in Greece would then be unsustainable. If this could be accomplished prior to German moves into the southern peninsula, it might force Hitler to reconsider the value of a Greek campaign. In contrast, the lack of Yugoslavian intervention at this point would insure the eventual fall of Greece outright if and when the Germans advanced, for the Greek and British forces would not be able to withstand a simultaneous Italian and German onslaught, unless they were provided the counterweight of the one million member Yugoslav Army.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid, pp. 46-53.



The British hoped that this fact would be but a mere detail since the important event--a change in power to a pro-British administration (albeit a junta)--had taken place. Excitement began to wane, however, as the new government, headed by a general named Simovic, waffled on where and, more importantly when, to commit federal troops to the front. There was no such wavering in Berlin, however, where the coup represented uncertainty and potential delay in German plans, thus necessitating an immediate resolution.<sup>134</sup>

The resultant war in Yugoslavia lasted a scant few weeks as German commanders once more verified their *Blitzkrieg* tactics on the field of battle and overwhelmed their disorganized victims. Germany then allowed her partners in the neighboring areas to divide up the spoils of the Yugoslavian campaign. British attempts at recruiting Yugoslavia had failed, Germany rolled through the country, and an identical fate for Greece would soon follow. Yet this would prove to be only the beginning of British subversion efforts in the Balkans as the many peoples that had for centuries been subjugated by numerous tyrants began to take exception to their latest uninvited landlord--Adolf Hitler.

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid, pp. 54-61.

The emergence of resistance movements in the Balkans was a welcome addition to the British war effort, and the parties of these movements were rewarded accordingly with weapons and material. In addition, Great Britain, in a fight for its very survival, now paid little regard to the future European order during its struggle against the Nazis; the British had no way of knowing that their sponsorship of leftist groups during the war would help usher in the polarized Europe of the Cold War. The ideological affiliation of the rebels was, therefore, a secondary consideration. The primary credential needed for a rebel to qualify for support in the eyes of the British being a desire to fight Germans:

The most active and effective forces were generally those formed from the political left, and within these the communists were able to gain a controlling position....The Allies wartime policy of supporting those partisan groups who were doing the most fighting was based on the premise that the most important consideration was to win the war....The result of this decision was that at the end of the war the armed power in each region was in the hands of the communist-dominated resistance forces.<sup>135</sup>

The resistance movements that grew in Yugoslavia and Greece were among the strongest in the Balkans, and the most significant to the allied cause. Unfortunately, in

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<sup>135</sup>Jelavich and Jelavich, p. 104.

Yugoslavia, there existed more than one group and each one had its own charter of what was best for the nation. The two main rebel forces were the *Chetniks* and the *Partisans*. The *Chetniks* were Serbian nationalists under the command of a Colonel Drazha Mihailovic. They were the first to form and immediately began action against the occupying Germans and the puppet *Ustasi* regime that had been established in the new, autonomous state of Croatia.<sup>136</sup>

The *Partisans* were born in Croatia under the leadership of Joseph Broz, better known as Tito. The *Partisans* were communists; and despite being ethnic Croats, they were strongly opposed to the anti-communist *Ustasi* front and of course the Nazis. For safety, the group was forced to relocate to Serb lands which brought them into conflict with the *Chetniks*. As a result a wild and violent period in Yugoslavian history began as a four-way civil war commenced between the *Chetniks*, the *Partisans*, the *Ustasi* and a rump government in Serbia. Before long the resident Muslims were involved as well, siding for the most part with the Croats

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<sup>136</sup>William T. Johnson, Deciphering the Balkan Enigma: Using History to Inform Policy, (Carlisle Barracks, Pa: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 25 March 1993), pp. 33-4. The *Ustasi* regime was a German-puppet Croatian nationalist government, loyal to the Axis, that was bent on making the new Yugoslavia a Croatian-dominated state. It was a brutal administration that murdered and expelled fellow Yugoslavs in its drive to achieve this ideal new Balkan nation.

and the Nazis. The brutalities that ensued from this convoluted internal struggle were to leave deep emotional scars among the various ethnic groups in the country that have come to life once more in the present conflict.<sup>137</sup>

The British originally supported both the *Chetniks* and the *Partisans*. As the war progressed, however, it became apparent that the *Chetniks* were more interested in killing *Partisans* than Germans, and even suspended activities against the Nazis for a period of time. This clearly went against British interests in the region and British diplomats protested profusely to Mihailovic, who was also by chance the Minister of war in the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London.<sup>138</sup>

But Mihailovic was seemingly more concerned with the governmental composition of the post-war Yugoslavia, not realizing that in failing to best address issues at present, he would virtually guarantee his non-participation in that future makeup. Because of this, and the fact that the *Partisans* were emerging conclusively as the predominant force for the future administration of a free Yugoslavia,

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<sup>137</sup>Ibid, pp. 34-5.

<sup>138</sup>Jelavich and Jelavich, pp. 107-8.

the British threw their full weight behind Tito's forces in early 1944.<sup>139</sup>

By the time the Soviet forces assisted in the official liberation of Belgrade, the feat had already been accomplished for the most part by Tito and his Partisans. This was naturally to Stalin's liking and the Soviets moved on to more pressing engagements. Thus began the brutal reign of Tito in communist Yugoslavia. And in his first move to consolidate his power he set out to eliminate those who had actively opposed the Partisan movement in the war. This purge resulted in the execution of over 100,000 Yugoslavs of one sort or another, further exacerbating the ethnic hatreds that thrived during the occupation; the purges left Tito firmly entrenched in the Yugoslav seat of power.<sup>140</sup>

#### **J. THE COLD WAR**

After the war the communist Yugoslavia spent little time in the Soviet "camp." Incensed with Stalin's assertiveness regarding the internal affairs of his state, Tito made a formal break with the Soviet Bloc in a nine-hour

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<sup>139</sup>Wheeler, pp. 234-244, also Jelavich and Jelavich, pp. 106-8.

<sup>140</sup>Barbara Jelavich, History of the Balkans, Twentieth Century, Volume II, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 270-3.

speech to his government officials.<sup>141</sup> Thereafter, despite continuing along communist lines, Tito's government began to fall obliquely under the influence of both East and West, much as Churchill and Stalin had agreed upon in 1944.<sup>142</sup>

But the influence of the British in the Balkans, and the world for that matter, would never be the same after World War Two. As the Cold War coalesced into being, the British had been forced to call upon the United States to lend assistance to defeat the communist elements in the Greek Revolution that began in 1946. The proclamation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947<sup>143</sup> was an indication that the allied leadership torch assumed by the Americans toward the end of the war was now firmly entrenched in Washington.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>Barbara Jelavich, vol. II, pp. 321-31.

<sup>142</sup>Barbara Jelavich, vol. II, pp. 285-6. The author cites Churchill's memoirs in which he described the subject meeting with Stalin. During their talk on 9 October, 1944, both leaders, in an extremely off-hand manner similar to the way they discussed the realignment of Poland's borders, addressed the Balkan question with regard to post-war spheres of influence. Churchill passed Stalin a note suggesting Soviet predominance in Bulgaria and Rumania, British stewardship in Greece, and equal influence in both Hungary and Yugoslavia. Stalin agreed to the proposal with a single, symbolic stroke of his pen.

<sup>143</sup>The key passage was "[it is] the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

<sup>144</sup>Kissinger, pp. 451-453.

Soon after, the vaunted British Empire began to unravel as independence movements were recognized in one area after another. Nuclear weapons would usher in the era of the superpowers and relegate Britain to the unfamiliar role of a secondary power.<sup>145</sup> Britain acquired nuclear weapons itself, but its continued reliance during the Cold War on American military might and deterrence capabilities is indisputable.

Other than the Greek revolution of 1946, British involvement in the Balkans during the Cold War was largely confined to resolving the dispute over Cyprus between fellow NATO members Greece and Turkey. Great Britain granted independence to that island nation in 1960, after nearly a century of British administration, only to watch the island's politics fall into chaos. A Cypriot civil war commenced between the ethnic Greek and the ethnic Turkish inhabitants, subsequently drawing both Greece and Turkey into the conflict. After a ceasefire was declared, a United Nations peacekeeping mission was dispatched to the island, and it remained there to this day. This contingent of U.N. troops has always had British soldiers among its ranks.

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<sup>145</sup>There are a great many volumes devoted to Great Britain's retrenchment from Empire. Among these, The Long Retreat by C.J. Bartlett is outstanding.

The Balkans of the Cold War era consisted of Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Romania. Of these only Greece maintained a democratic form of government (except for the period under military rule , 1967-1974). The remaining nations were communist of one form or another and with varying degrees of allegiance to Moscow. The West attempted to cultivate relationships with the Balkan communist nations but, for the most part, the efforts made in the form of monetary assistance and political activities made little headway toward transforming any of the governments. The most that can be said is that Western exertions were able to loosen Soviet control over these areas and help bring about a "neutrality," or "nonalignment," of Yugoslavia in particular with respect to its Cold War allegiance.<sup>146</sup>

But with the Greek Civil War having taken place during the early phase of the Cold War, there was never another battle to determine which camp retained the most influence in the Balkans. One can never know whether the Soviets were willing to use Budapest, Berlin, and Prague tactics in a Balkan capital any more than one can ascertain whether the response from the West in such a scenario would have been similar to its stance in previous Eastern Bloc upheavals.

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<sup>146</sup>Barbara Jelavich, vol. II, pp. 328-9, 378.



## K. SUMMARY

This brief sketch of British history in the Balkans is by no means comprehensive but does bring to the fore the major incursions by Great Britain into Balkan political and military affairs. It has been seen that British interventions in the Balkans have occurred across a wide spectrum of European settings during which time British interests have changed, as has Britain's status from that as a preeminent world power to its current standing.

The Balkans came to the forefront of British foreign policy during the era of the Pax Britannica and the appearance of the Eastern Question. British statesmen of the nineteenth century attempted to balance their national interests in the region with the desires of a public concerned about moral obligations. This led Britain to follow a policy for most of the century that included propping up a weakening Ottoman Empire to preclude the dangerous extension of Russian influence in the Near East and the Balkans. The danger that Britain feared was a loss of maritime superiority in the Eastern Mediterranean and the possible disruption of the prized British trade routes to India and the Far East.

This policy came to its reckoning in the 1870s when it became apparent that Britain could no longer, with good conscience, support the Turks, who had repeatedly committed

offenses not in keeping with the moral aspirations of the British nation. After the Congress of Berlin, the British retreated briefly from Balkan and European political maneuvering, only to be drawn back into both out of both public demand at home and the realization that British security would be in jeopardy if they chose to remain isolated.

The World Wars saw Great Britain fighting in Europe over traditional British concerns regarding the unacceptable rise of a continental hegemonic power. The Balkans played a part in the British history of both wars but with different degrees of success. The British military expeditions in the region in World War One were strategically unsuccessful and devastating in terms of casualties. In World War Two, another unsuccessful attempt to divert German might to a front in the Balkans occurred, but, the resistance movements championed by the British there during the Nazi occupation were so successful as to have the desired effect. An inordinate amount of Wehrmacht divisions had to be allocated to the rebellious Balkan region, which contributed significantly to the ultimate allied victory.

The Cold War yielded comparatively little British action in the Balkans. The British call for American assistance during the Greek Civil War was a clear indication that the last war had put a severe drain on the economic and

psychological resources of the nation. Thereafter, the Cold War stalemate in Europe provided little opportunity for Western inroads into the Balkans, with the exception of the unique neutrality of Yugoslavia. In any event, with its vast Empire relinquished and its status among world powers beginning to decline, Great Britain was no longer physically able to affect the Balkan equation as it had for the previous one hundred and fifty years.

#### IV. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS: THE ESSENTIAL BRITISH PURPOSES IN THE BALKANS TODAY

##### A. Setting the World Stage

A brief examination of the current international situation may be useful in assessing the value of some of the traditional British security paradigms with respect to the current Balkan War. Of primary importance is the fact that the Cold War has ended. The rapid demise of the Soviet Union has left the United States alone in the category of "superpowers." This new strategic situation has led some to suggest that we have entered a period of unipolarity in the world order.<sup>147</sup> Others see the world instead reverting back to a multipolar environment. In such a system the United States would qualify as one of several "major" powers, along with the likes of Russia, China, Britain, France, Germany and Japan.

Whatever the configuration, the world will no longer be subjected to the same ideological battle of conquest and containment that dominated international politics from 1945-1989. In the new situation, the major threat to the security of many nations has been removed.

It seems logical that in such an environment, nations that were previously restricted in their foreign ambitions

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<sup>147</sup>Kissinger, p. 809.

because of the constraints imposed by the superpowers will now have an opportunity to pursue their national agendas with fewer inhibitions. Moreover, some approaches to international relations theory suggest that at a time such as this, when (for certain privileged nations at least) there is an abundance of real security, nations are more likely to pursue their own aims, with less concern for allies and other partners since security is not such an overriding concern.<sup>148</sup> In NATO, "renationalization" trends have become evident.

Because of this evolving political backdrop, nations that have the political-military capability to influence affairs abroad, can be reasonably sure that, if the situation goes awry, it will not lead to a superpower nuclear confrontation. This was, of course, the ultimate fear during the Cold War. Consequently, it will not be surprising to see more nation-states pursuing foreign policy goals that are more national in their origins, and more reflective of the ideals of the people as a whole.

With the aforementioned global setting in mind, prior to embarking upon an examination of the relevance of the concepts of strategic culture and national interest with respect to the British handling of the current Balkan War,

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<sup>148</sup>Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 91-2.

we must first broach the issue of national participation. More specifically, at the outset of the discussion on the reasons for the British operations and diplomatic overtures visible today, it is imperative to recall the importance of the national identity of the soldiers assigned to a U.N. peacekeeping mission.

The nationality of peacekeepers is one of the main factors that the U.N. must examine prior to organizing a peacekeeping force for a particular region. It is a given that troops of a certain hypothetical nationality placed in the wrong peacekeeping setting, despite donning blue helmets, could destabilize a situation. Such a detrimental and provocative result would be possible if the presence of certain foreign troops in a region revived historical animosities left over from earlier events.<sup>149</sup>

Moreover, national governments also acknowledge this situation and are not likely to expose their troops in a mission of peace that may instead put them in harm's way. Germany, for one, is currently in the process of confronting this issue, since the reinterpretation of its Basic Law in July 1994 will allow German troops to participate in U.N. peacekeeping initiatives in the future.

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<sup>149</sup>Malcolm Rifkind, "Peace and Stability--The British Military Contribution", pp. 5, 7-8. Text of a speech given to the Carnegie Council in New York on 13 April 1994.

Applying this very principle to future German operations, for example, might eliminate numerous regions as being politically unsuitable for the deployment of the Bundeswehr if it is determined that it would not be prudent for it to visit foreign soil that had been previously tread on by the Wehrmacht:

...Germany is now a nation capable of sharing the security burden. German politicians had hidden behind the Constitution whenever the question of committing troops abroad came up. But the real impediments remain *historical* and *political*.<sup>150</sup>

Moreover, any German suspicions that the Balkans might indeed be one such "off limits" area to their German troops were partially confirmed by an Albanian initiative earlier this year. Bundeswehr Inspector General Klaus Naumann told his audience in a speech at the "Bundeswehr and Society" forum on 22 March, that German ships and aircraft were not be allowed to enter Albanian waters or airspace, even though Albania has permitted NATO to use its territorial areas to enforce the embargo in the Adriatic.<sup>151</sup>

This example illustrates the point that the nationality and perceived impartiality of peacekeepers is a sensitive

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<sup>150</sup>"The German Special Relationship", *New York Times*, July 11, 1994, p. A10.

<sup>151</sup>Klaus Naumann, "The Bundeswehr is Undergoing a Change Equal to a New Beginning", speech given on 22 April 1994, condensed in *Welt Am Sonntag*, 27 April 1994, pp. 25,27.

issue to the countries hosting the missions. Seen in this light, the case can safely be made that the British themselves have made a *national* commitment to the operations in Bosnia, even though it has been under the guise of that supreme *international* body--United Nations.

## **B. STRATEGIC CULTURE VERSUS THE NATIONAL INTEREST**

### **1. A Case for "Historical Responsibility"**

It has already been established that the current British military presence in the Balkans is not unprecedented in terms of attempting to influence Balkan politics. Barbara Jelavich suggests that peninsula has not merely fallen under the occasional influence of the historic powers, but rather has suffered in large part due to their diplomatic power plays and military intervention. The Balkans are in turmoil today in part due to the manipulation and machinations by the powers of yesterday:

The Eastern Question did indeed turn the Balkans into the "powderkeg of Europe," but the responsibility for this situation lay as much with the great powers and the principle of the balance of power as with the Balkan states.<sup>152</sup>

As one of the great powers mentioned above, Britain played a key part in the troubled history of the Balkans. And while the historical British presence may at first seem

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<sup>152</sup>Barbara Jelavich, Vol. II, p. 440.



to be largely inconsequential to today's conflict, a closer analysis reveals that the British may feel some responsibility for current events in the Balkans.

From a strategic culture standpoint, the extensive British presence in the Balkans since the early nineteenth century provides those "historical links" to that region, as discussed previously, that the British established in many corners of the world. From this alone, and given the fundamental fact that the Balkans are in Europe, one could presume that events there today should still be of concern to Britain.

But perhaps as important are the *effects* that British initiatives in the Balkans have had in the *past*. As has already been documented here, Great Britain's historical forays into the Balkans have really been due to three concerns: the "Eastern Question", but most notably the prevention of Russian dominance in the Balkans; in this century, as part of a grand strategy to defeat a continental threat to security (Germany); or in response to the British public's concern for the moral issues there such as nationalist movements of self-determination and campaigns for peace and human rights.

The first two of these calls to action harken back to basic "national interest" and security concerns while the latter reflects the moral and idealistic undercurrents in

British foreign policy. Despite this distinction with respect to the causes of British intervention, Britain's conduct in carrying out its designs there did not always reflect an acute concern for the impact that its part in Balkan power-brokering would have on long-term Balkan stability.

Even when issues such as respect for minorities and the establishment of equitable boundaries were at stake during the many international conferences on the Balkans, the British, as was the case with the other powers, were never able to fully resolve some of the conflicts between their own national interests and what was best for the Balkan nations.

Moreover, British leverage and power during the historical negotiations on the Balkans were significant. Even though it was the Russians, the Austrians, the Turks, and later the Germans, that most often stormed the area with troops, the British influence in the subsequent peace processes was undeniable. This was evident at the first of the great conferences that included Balkan issues on its agenda--the Congress of Berlin:

When asked to reflect on the center of gravity at the Congress, Bismarck pointed to Disraeli: *"Der alte Jude, das*

*ist der Mann*" (The old Jew, he is the man).<sup>153</sup>

And as "the man," Disraeli no doubt had a part in laying the groundwork for the Bosnian debacle, as discussed earlier, from which the road to World War One really began in earnest when, "Austria frivolously implemented a thirty-year-old codicil from the Congress of Berlin in which the powers had agreed to let Austria annex Bosnia-Hercegovina."<sup>154</sup> Moreover, despite the fact that the Congress of Berlin was the most significant event in the nineteenth century in terms of recognizing national liberation movements, by the time it was completed, none of the Balkan states was satisfied with its contents, or sated in its territorial objectives.<sup>155</sup>

It may be difficult for some to accept that ethnic groups in the Balkans could harbor animosities over events and conferences that happened so long ago, but this is the case:

The trek of over 1,000,000 Serbs to the "Field of the Blackbirds" in Kosovo in 1989 to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Ottoman victory that ended an independent Serbia best

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<sup>153</sup>Kissinger, p. 155.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid, p. 195.

<sup>155</sup>Barbara Jelavich, Vol. II, pp. 7-8.

illustrates, perhaps, the depth of historical attachment in this region.<sup>156</sup>

Still, if one should seek more recent examples of the negative impact of British intervention in Balkan affairs, one need look no further than to the creation of Yugoslavia after the First World War, or to the complicated resistance movements in the Balkans in World War Two. In both cases, the British were unquestionably the chief sponsors.

In the first instance, the British, and others, succumbed to Wilsonian concepts of national self-determination while redrawing the map of Europe. The Great Powers' attempts to create a Kingdom of Croats, Serbs and Slovenes that would be acceptable to all in the region failed to consider whether the new state would be able to overcome the predominant historical force in the Balkans-- ethnicity. In the end it could not and Yugoslavia was in a state of political disarray years before the coming of Hitler's Reich.<sup>157</sup> In World War Two, little attention was paid by Britain to which resistance movements would be best for the future stability of the Balkan states. There were much more pressing problems at the time, such as

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<sup>156</sup>J.F.O. McAllister, "Ever Greater Serbia," *Time*, September 28, 1992, p. 56.

<sup>157</sup>George F. Will, "Bedeviled by Ethnicity," *Newsweek*, August 24, 1992, pp. 47-8. See also Jelavich and Jelavich, pp. 96-9, and Kissinger, p. 808.

preventing the Wehrmacht from rolling through all of Europe. Consequently, as long as Germans were being killed by resistance rebels, the latter would garner British support. As a result, Great Britain abandoned its first resistance allies, the Serb-dominated Chetniks, and threw its weight behind the Partisan movement, led by the future Yugoslavian Communist ruler, Tito.

The Serb population suffered severely during the war at the hands of both the Partisans and the Nazi-sponsored Ustasi regime in Croatia. And after the war, Tito proceeded, in a particularly brutal fashion, to solidify his dictatorial position by executing nearly all those who had actively opposed his Partisan movement during World War Two and the concurrent Yugoslav Civil War (despite the fact that it had been one of the most confusing periods in history, even by Balkan standards).<sup>158</sup>

These events may help to explain why the British are overtly less willing to punish the Serbs for their actions in Bosnia than is the United States, which continues to call for harsher measures against Serbia. Perhaps the British, having been the main promoter of Tito during World War Two,

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<sup>158</sup>Johnsen, pp. 33-6. Johnsen notes that the term "ethnic cleansing," made notorious by the current Serb atrocities, was used by the Ustasi regime while conducting the forced emigration and murder campaign that uprooted or exterminated hundreds of thousands of Serbs and Muslims.

feel a sense of responsibility, or even guilt, for the way events unfolded in the Balkans in World War Two, and are thus adamant against taking sides in this latest of Balkan calamities. Churchill did, after all, realize only too late what a monster he had created in Yugoslavia.<sup>159</sup>

Perhaps the sense of responsibility goes back further, to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Britain took an active role in determining the fate of the Balkans by participating at historic gatherings on the "Eastern Question." These conferences were very similar in that virtually all ignored the representation of the Balkan nations while simultaneously constructing new Balkan borders that were rarely popular and never enduring.

British Secretary of State for Defense Malcolm Rifkind alluded to these feelings of responsibility and accountability within the British psyche in a speech given to the Carnegie Council on 13 April 1994, entitled, "Peace and Stability--The British Military Contribution." The underlying theme of the speech appeared to be an appeal for an increased U.S. involvement in the Bosnian crisis through greater U.S. support of British objectives in the U.N. and, ideally, an infusion of additional American military manpower in the Balkans. Mr. Rifkind painted the Bosnian

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<sup>159</sup>Michael Lees, The Rape of Serbia, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990), pp. 333-41.

affair as being both a concern of Great Britain's in the strategic cultural sense, as well as a national interest. His comments reveal much about the way in which the British view this crisis:

For the United Kingdom , like the United States, the investment in peace is not a simple one, and nor is it confined to our region of the world. There are many reasons for the wide spread of the United Kingdom's engagements round the world. In addition to overseas territories, extensive economic and trading interests, and historical and emotional ties in many areas of the world, we have a developed sense of responsibility in matters international. This international outlook is one we share in particular with the United States and our European partners. It has led us to acknowledge that national and regional endeavors which are too narrowly focused and which, therefore, do not promote and protect peace world-wide, do not, in the end, promote our national interests.<sup>160</sup>

When Mr. Rifkind spoke of "historical and emotional ties in many areas of the world," and a "developed sense of responsibility in matters international," he was referring to a specific strategic cultural trait that emanated from the British imperial and colonial experience. British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Douglas Hurd issued a similar statement in a presentation to the Royal United Services Institute in October of 1992. Mr Hurd submitted

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<sup>160</sup>Malcom Rifkind, Carnegie Speech, p. 2.

that the British would continue in peacekeeping endeavors in part due to a "developed sense of international responsibility."<sup>161</sup>

Mr. Rifkind also makes a deliberate and obvious attempt (in the previous passage) to drum up support among his American audience by submitting that the United States has similar long-term goals. Yet in doing so he forgets that while the United States has similar ties in the world, they may not be to the same regions as the British, and for obvious reasons. The United States has its own strategic culture, and with the recent collapse of its chief foe in foreign confrontations, it seems less concerned with overseas ventures and inclined to concentrate more on matters closer to home. The American decision to intervene in Haiti after withdrawing from Somalia may be an indication of this trend. As a result, the United States may not feel obligated in the post-Cold War world to assist the British militarily in every crisis.

In addition, Mr. Rifkind touched upon the economic and trading interests that influence British foreign policy, and how the maintenance of peace is important to ensure the vitality of these operations. There is no doubt that, on the whole, commerce benefits from conditions of world

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<sup>161</sup>Douglas Hurd, "Foreign Policy and International Security", *The RUSI Journal*, December 1992, p. 3.



cooperation. But this should not be misconstrued so as to suggest that peace in the Balkans today, for example, is as important to British commercial concerns as it was in the previous century. Great Britain has many more trading partners today, in a world that is getting smaller all the time. Trade with the Balkan states is but one modest ingredient in the British economy. Furthermore, instability in the region today does not threaten to lead to a disruption in the prized British routes to India as it did in the nineteenth century.

But perhaps the most strategic culturally-biased aspect of Mr. Rifkind's comments is the conviction that the idealistic call to promote peace world-wide is tied directly with the national interests of the U.S. and Great Britain. As an ultimate goal, world-wide peace is traditionally viewed as being a moral and idealistic ambition and not a specific *national interest*, by the definition in this thesis (that is, focusing on power and the material interests of the nation-state). It is a tall order to aspire to achieve so lofty an aim.

From an American perspective, one need only consider the Congressional initiatives concerning the use of U.S. troops in United Nations peacekeeping contingents. In the much publicized "Contract with America" sponsored by the Republican Party, there is a provision calling for a law

that will "require the President to certify to Congress that each peacekeeping operation is of vital national interest."<sup>162</sup>

## **2. A Case for "Immediate Responsibility"**

With the justifications for the claim of historical responsibility firmly in mind it is imperative to examine the immediate causes of today's conflict as well. An understanding of the circumstances that prompted military action in the Balkans may yield additional information as to who may feel a sense of "immediate responsibility" for the outbreak of this conflict.

As is the case for every significant historical event, there will eventually be several different versions in print with regard to the unfolding of events. Scholars will devote enormous research toward writing an official history of the affair but in the end even this effort will be rejected by some (the origins of World War One offer an example). Yet for the purposes of this study, it is essential to attempt to focus on an event, or series of incidents, that may have initiated the fighting. British responsibility, however slight, may have justified further British intervention.

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<sup>162</sup>Tom Masland and James Whitmore, "Going Down the Aid 'Rathole'?", *Newsweek*, December 5, 1994, p. 39.

The landmark event most often cited in the media and journals as being the primary cause of hostilities did not even transpire in the Balkans proper. It was instead a diplomatic overture by the European Union--the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia in December of 1991--that, while not the initial source of ignition, provided the fuel for the conflict to burn indefinitely.

The first shots in the Third Balkan War were actually fired in Slovenia in mid-1991 after that nation, as well as Croatia, declared its independence from the Serb-dominated federal government in Belgrade. The thought of an independent Croatia conjured up images in the minds of the Serbian minorities there of the brutal Ustasi regime in World War Two. It is doubtful that this brutality would have been repeated in contemporary Croatia but the fear nonetheless gave the Serbs a rationale to take up arms. Meanwhile, in Belgrade, the well-armed and predominantly Serbian-led Yugoslav Army used the occasion to begin its quest for a "greater Serbia."<sup>163</sup> There were some breaks in the fighting through the rest of 1991. But as the year came to a close the EC made its fateful decision.

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<sup>163</sup>Michael G. Roskin, "The Third Balkan War, and How It Will End", *Parameters*, U.S. Army War College Quarterly, Autumn 1994, pp. 57-69.

In the meantime, in the capitals of Europe, while peace initiatives were being explored, the Balkan War was condemned to expansion when the European Union (still officially the European Community at that point) recognized the independence of both Slovenia and Croatia in December of 1991, playing into the hands of the Serbian propaganda campaign and "justifying" the Serbian cause. Worst of all was the reporting that it had been Germany, the founder of the infamous Ustasi Croatia, that bullied its other EC partners into the diplomatic gesture.<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore, at a time when concern for a united EC was considered paramount, London and Paris were both worried about the internal damage to political cohesion within the community that would result from a unilateral German recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, or from the failure to reach any policy agreement whatsoever:

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<sup>164</sup>In a 28 November 1994 lecture at Stanford University given by the Director of Modern History Studies at Cambridge University, the speaker--Professor Michael Stenton--revealed that the economically powerful Germans had used leverage with regard to concessions within the Maastricht accord in order to gain acceptance of its recognition policy for Slovenia and Croatia. This is also verified in John Zametica's *The Yugoslav Conflict*, *Adelphi Paper* no. 270, (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1992), p. 65. The author states, "The UK, entertaining serious misgivings to the end, finally gave in to the pressure from Bonn as a return favour for Germany's compromises at Maastricht over EC monetary union." In the footnote for this passage, the author cites private interviews with FCO officials.

The crisis in Yugoslavia caught the EC at an unfortunate moment: It was in the middle of a heated debate about its political destination. Prominent in the debate were the questions of a common defence identity and, hardly less controversially, a common foreign policy....thus it was critically important to them to preserve what could be preserved of EC unity in foreign affairs. Had they allowed Germany to take unilateral action, as it had repeatedly threatened in no uncertain terms, that unity would have been very difficult to rebuild.<sup>165</sup>

As a result, despite the fact that it was now feared that a recognition of the breakaway states would surely cause the region to explode, the leaders of the EC demonstrated that for their long-term purposes "consensus was more important than peace."<sup>166</sup>

This need for unanimity in the EC was joined by a sense of "immediate responsibility" as the conflict intensified. This was evident in the way in which the EC approached this violent crisis occurring in its post-Cold War sphere of influence. Unfortunately, it was not long before the Third Balkan War proved to be anything but the diplomatic building-block sought by Brussels:

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<sup>165</sup>Zametica, pp. 59, 65.

<sup>166</sup>This observation is also drawn from the Stenton lecture. Although he made a specific reference to those in positions of influence in Great Britain when making the "consensus" point, the other governments fell in line as well.

The Europeans favored EC leadership because Yugoslavia was viewed as an opportune foreign policy challenge at the very moment German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, French President Francois Mitterand and others wished to display the EC's ability to act effectively and cohesively. Luxembourg's foreign minister, speaking for the EC's troika of emissaries, proclaimed it "the hour of Europe," a quote whose painful echo is a reminder of how badly the Europeans misjudged the dogs of this Balkan war.<sup>167</sup>

There appears to be one more reason for British intervention in the Balkan crisis that is influenced by the British strategic culture--the cry for humanitarian assistance. Much like Mr. Rifkind's earlier idealistic call for world peace, humanitarian assistance is an awesome task that does not fit within the confines of the definition of national interest used here (that is, focusing on power and the material interests of the nation-state). Nonetheless, the British aspire to high moral standards in the conduct of their foreign affairs, and have made the humanitarian issue in the Balkans a cause for action before, as far back as the Greek Revolution of 1830. This fact, coupled with the findings about historical and immediate responsibilities previously reported, necessitated that the British take an

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<sup>167</sup>David Gompert, "How to Defeat Serbia", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1994, p. 35.

active role in limiting the suffering in this latest show of Balkan horrors.

The humanitarian mission was, after all, the first mission that generated public interest in the West. Mr. John Home Robertson, a member of Parliament, appealed for the continuation of this humanitarian cause in the Balkans, in a recent House of Commons debate. In his comments he also extolled the virtues of international institutions such as the U.N.:

...it would be unthinkable for the United Nations to walk away from the humanitarian task that it set up in the former Yugoslavia. Millions of people are now dependent on supplies delivered under United Nations protection. I saw some of those people in recent weeks, and it would be a crime to abandon them. Quite apart from our humanitarian obligations, we cannot afford to destroy the credibility of the United Nations as an international peacekeeping organisation. It might not be very good, but it is still all we have and it must be sustained.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>John Home Robertson, House of Commons Official Report--Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) 18 October 1994, p. 176. Mr. Rifkind closed his speech (the same speech cited earlier in this study) with this statement: "the U.N. is the best organisation we have in this imperfect world to strive for peace and stability. We need to cherish and improve the U.N. We cannot let it go the way of the League of Nations."

### C. A BOSNIAN TRAGEDY

At the time of this writing, the international efforts to bring peace to the beleaguered state of Bosnia have been disappointing. A seemingly endless series of negotiations has yielded little in the way of actual progress toward a resolution of the conflict; attempts to reach agreements on the issues have left most of the parties dissatisfied.

When British peacemaking efforts bogged down and fighting continued, the British asked the United States for assistance in the form of ground troops, but that type of American aid was not forthcoming. In this regard, American policy toward the Balkans has been influenced much more by the national interest (in the narrow, material sense used in this thesis) than has Great Britain's. David Gompert of the Rand Corporation seems to accurately reflect this U.S. attitude:

Great as our sorrow is for the slaughter and for our mistakes, it is unfair to suggest that the United States bears the main responsibility. Our military superiority and international leadership role do not obligate us to sacrifice our sons and daughters to combat brutality wherever it occurs.<sup>169</sup>

Thus, the U.S.-British "special relationship" that appeared to have been strengthened during the Gulf War has been distinctly absent in the present conflict. This

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<sup>169</sup>Gompert, p. 30.



absence has also been evident in the November 1994 U.S. decision to unilaterally lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims and Croats, against strong opposition from both London and Paris.

Yet even worse from the British perspective has been the appearance and application of the dreaded word "appeasement" to Britain's hamstrung operations in Bosnia. The scapegoat for the appeasement accusations has been the British General Michael Rose, who leads the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia. In October of this year, Anthony Lewis wrote that Rose's soft approach toward the Serbs "faithfully reflects the weakest, most pathetic British Government of modern times."<sup>170</sup> On December 4, 1994, Stanley Hoffmann openly compared Bosnia to Munich and Ethiopia.<sup>171</sup> And at home in the House of Commons, the General fell under the unusual criticism of a House member:

I appreciate that it is difficult to deal with people such as the Bosnian Serb authorities, but I doubt whether appeasement is the right line, so I was very surprised when General Rose rebuked Bosnian Government forces for seeking to secure part of their own territory during the past month. It is a mistake to try to be even-handed between an aggressor and his victims, especially

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<sup>170</sup>Anthony Lewis, "Wrong From The Start", *New York Times*, October 10, 1994, p. A12.

<sup>171</sup>Stanley Hoffmann, "What Will Satisfy Serbia's Nationalists?", *New York Times*, OP-ED page, December 4, 1994.

when one is acting on behalf of the  
United Nations.<sup>172</sup>

As of December 1994, the Balkan War is back in full swing. The expected infusion of arms into the area since the lifting of the embargo enforcement by the U.S. may take some time, but the American decision may have provided the West Europeans with a justification for withdrawing their forces from the Balkans. By stressing the increased danger to their peacekeeping forces as a result of the lifting of the embargo by the U.S., the Europeans have been given a rationale to withdraw.

Should the British decide to remove their troops from Bosnia altogether, it will doubtless usher in a new phase of the war which will, in all probability, no longer end through negotiation but rather through the defeat of one side by the other. The British will then probably devote their efforts toward preventing the conflict from spreading to neighboring trouble spots such as Kosovo, or Macedonia. It is widely feared that the ethnic composition and historical animosities in these regions could potentially fuel a much larger Balkan War if the current conflict were to spread to any one such area. Such a war could ravage more Balkan areas and possibly draw in neighboring nations such as Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece. At worst,

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<sup>172</sup>Robertson, p. 177.

such a war could involve those nations just mentioned plus several others, possibly including the United States and Russia. Great Britain would obviously be unable to remain aloof from this type of crisis.

The British will probably attempt to thwart this disaster by bolstering the American troop presence in Macedonia and perhaps other regions. In the speech by Mr. Rifkind referred to earlier, the Secretary, in outlining the objectives in Bosnia, first mentioned "containing the conflict" as being one of the three aims of the international community. Yet later in his remarks he repeated the overall strategy for the Bosnian operations but this time left out the "containment" clause.<sup>173</sup>

Perhaps this was an unconscious omission on his part, but maybe not. Adherence to the policy of mere containment of the conflict certainly does not reflect the British experience in Bosnia thus far. But as the U.S. prepares to assist in the withdrawal of UNPROFOR from Bosnia, British goals may change overnight.<sup>174</sup> If this happens, the new British objective, preventing the third cataclysmic war in

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<sup>173</sup>Rifkind Speech, pp. 3, 5.

<sup>174</sup>Douglas Jehl, "25,000 U.S. Troops To Aid U.N. Force If It Quits Bosnia", *New York Times*, December 9, 1994, pp. A1, A7.

Europe this century, will reflect the only true British national interest in the current Bosnian tragedy.

In summary, strategic culture can wield considerable impact in the formation of British foreign policy. The narrowly defined concept of national interest that is employed in this work has also been a factor in British efforts in the current Balkan struggle, only to a lesser degree.



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